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OUR OLD HOME

BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE
ANNOTATED WITH PASSAGES FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTE-BOOK, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAVURES

VOLUME
II

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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OUR OLD HOME

VII.

NEAR OXFORD

On a fine morning in September we set out on an excursion to Blenheim, — the sculptor and myself being seated on the box of our four-horse carriage, two more of the party in the dicky, and the others less agreeably accommodated inside. We had no coachman, but two postilions in short scarlet jackets and leather breeches with top-boots, each astride of a horse; so that, all the way along, when not otherwise attracted, we had the interesting spectacle of their up-and-down bobbing in the saddle. It was a sunny and beautiful day, a specimen of the perfect English weather, just warm enough for comfort, — indeed, a little too warm, perhaps, in the noontide sun, — yet retaining a mere spice or suspicion of austerity, which made it all the more enjoyable.

The country between Oxford and Blenheim is not particularly interesting, being almost level, or undulating very slightly; nor is Oxfordshire, agriculturally, a rich part of England. We saw one or two hamlets, and I especially remember a picturesque old gabled house at a turnpike gate, and, altogether, the wayside scenery had an aspect of old-fashioned English life; but there was nothing very memorable till we reached Woodstock, and stopped to water our horses at the Black Bear. This neighborhood is called New Woodstock, but has by no means the brand-new appearance of an American town, being a large village of stone houses, most of them pretty well time-worn and weather-stained. The Black Bear is an ancient inn, large and respectable, with balustraded staircases, and intricate passages and corridors, and queer old pictures and engravings hanging in the entries and apartments. We ordered a lunch (the most delightful of English institutions, next to dinner) to be ready against our return, and then resumed our drive to Blenheim.

The park gate of Blenheim stands close to the end of the village street of Woodstock. Immediately on passing through its

portals we saw the stately palace in the distance, but made a wide circuit of the park before approaching it. This noble park contains three thousand acres of land, and is fourteen miles in circumference. Having been, in part, a royal domain before it was granted to the Marlborough family, it contains many trees of unsurpassed antiquity, and has doubtless been the haunt of game and deer for centuries. We saw pheasants in abundance, feeding in the open lawns and glades; and the stags tossed their antlers and bounded away, not affrighted, but only shy and gamesome, as we drove by. It is a magnificent pleasure-ground, not too tamely kept, nor rigidly subjected within rule, but vast enough to have lapsed back into nature again, after all the pains that the landscape-gardeners of Queen Anne's time bestowed on it, when the domain of Blenheim was scientifically laid out. The great, knotted, slanting trunks of the old oaks do not now look as if man had much intermeddled with their growth and postures. The trees of later date, that were set out in the Great Duke's time, are arranged on the plan of the order of battle in which the illustrious commander ranked his troops at Blenheim; but the

ground covered is so extensive, and the trees now so luxuriant, that the spectator is not disagreeably conscious of their standing in military array, as if Orpheus had summoned them together by beat of drum. The effect must have been very formal a hundred and fifty years ago, but has ceased to be so, — although the trees, I presume, have kept their ranks with even more fidelity than Marlborough's veterans did.

One of the park-keepers, on horseback, rode beside our carriage, pointing out the choice views, and glimpses at the palace, as we drove through the domain. There is a very large artificial lake (to say the truth, it seemed to me fully worthy of being compared with the Welsh lakes, at least, if not with those of Westmoreland), which was created by Capability Brown, and fills the basin that he scooped for it, just as if Nature had poured these broad waters into one of her own valleys. It is a most beautiful object at a distance, and not less so on its immediate banks ; for the water is very pure, being supplied by a small river, of the choicest transparency, which was turned thitherward for the purpose. And Blenheim owes not merely this water scenery, but almost all its other beauties, to the

contrivance of man. Its natural features are not striking; but Art has effected such wonderful things that the uninstructed visitor would never guess that nearly the whole scene was but the embodied thought of a human mind. A skillful painter hardly does more for his blank sheet of canvas than the landscape-gardener, the planter, the arranger of trees, has done for the monotonous surface of Blenheim, — making the most of every undulation, — flinging down a hillock, a big lump of earth out of a giant's hand, wherever it was needed, — putting in beauty as often as there was a niche for it, — opening vistas to every point that deserved to be seen, and throwing a veil of impenetrable foliage around what ought to be hidden; — and then, to be sure, the lapse of a century has softened the harsh outline of man's labors, and has given the place back to Nature again with the addition of what consummate science could achieve.

After driving a good way, we came to a battlemented tower and adjoining house, which used to be the residence of the Ranger of Woodstock Park, who held charge of the property for the King before the Duke of Marlborough possessed it.

The keeper opened the door for us, and in the entrance-hall we found various things that had to do with the chase and woodland sports. We mounted the staircase, through several stories, up to the top of the tower, whence there was a view of the spires of Oxford, and of points much farther off, — very indistinctly seen, however, as is usually the case with the misty distances of England. Returning to the ground-floor, we were ushered into the room in which died Wilmot, the wicked Earl of Rochester, who was Ranger of the Park in Charles II.'s time. It is a low and bare little room, with a window in front, and a smaller one behind; and in the contiguous entrance-room there are the remains of an old bedstead, beneath the canopy of which, perhaps, Rochester may have made the penitent end that Bishop Burnet attributes to him. I hardly know what it is, in this poor fellow's character, which affects us with greater tenderness on his behalf than for all the other profligates of his day, who seem to have been neither better nor worse than himself. I rather suspect that he had a human heart which never quite died out of him, and the warmth of which is still faintly perceptible amid the dissolute trash which he left behind.

Methinks, if such good fortune ever befell a bookish man, I should choose this lodge for my own residence, with the topmost room of the tower for a study, and all the seclusion of cultivated wildness beneath to ramble in. There being no such possibility, we drove on, catching glimpses of the palace in new points of view, and by and by came to Rosamond's Well. The particular tradition that connects Fair Rosamond with it is not now in my memory; but if Rosamond ever lived and loved, and ever had her abode in the maze of Woodstock, it may well be believed that she and Henry sometimes sat beside this spring. It gushes out from a bank, through some old stone-work, and dashes its little cascade (about as abundant as one might turn out of a large pitcher) into a pool, whence it steals away towards the lake, which is not far removed. The water is exceedingly cold, and as pure as the legendary Rosamond was not, and is fancied to possess medicinal virtues, like springs at which saints have quenched their thirst. There were two or three old women and some children in attendance with tumblers, which they present to visitors, full of the consecrated water; but most of us filled the tumblers for ourselves, and drank.

Thence we drove to the Triumphal Pillar which was erected in honor of the Great Duke, and on the summit of which he stands, in a Roman garb, holding a winged figure of Victory in his hand, as an ordinary man might hold a bird. The column is I know not how many feet high, but lofty enough, at any rate, to elevate Marlborough far above the rest of the world, and to be visible a long way off; and it is so placed in reference to other objects, that, wherever the hero wandered about his grounds, and especially as he issued from his mansion, he must inevitably have been reminded of his glory. In truth, until I came to Blenheim, I never had so positive and material an idea of what Fame really is — of what the admiration of his country can do for a successful warrior — as I carry away with me and shall always retain. Unless he had the moral force of a thousand men together, his egotism (beholding himself everywhere, imbuing the entire soil, growing in the woods, rippling and gleaming in the water, and pervading the very air with his greatness) must have been swollen within him like the liver of a Strasburg goose. On the huge tablets inlaid into the pedestal of

the column, the entire Act of Parliament, bestowing Blenheim on the Duke of Marlborough and his posterity, is engraved in deep letters, painted black on the marble ground. The pillar stands exactly a mile from the principal front of the palace, in a straight line with the precise centre of its entrance-hall; so that, as already said, it was the Duke's principal object of contemplation.

We now proceeded to the palace-gate, which is a great pillared archway, of wonderful loftiness and state, giving admittance into a spacious quadrangle. A stout, elderly, and rather surly footman in livery appeared at the entrance, and took possession of whatever canes, umbrellas, and parasols he could get hold of, in order to claim sixpence on our departure. This had a somewhat ludicrous effect. There is much public outcry against the meanness of the present Duke in his arrangements for the admission of visitors (chiefly, of course, his native countrymen) to view the magnificent palace which their forefathers bestowed upon his own. In many cases, it seems hard that a private abode should be exposed to the intrusion of the public merely because the proprietor has inherited

or created a splendor which attracts general curiosity; insomuch that his home loses its sanctity and seclusion for the very reason that it is better than other men's houses. But in the case of Blenheim, the public have certainly an equitable claim to admission, both because the fame of its first inhabitant is a national possession, and because the mansion was a national gift, one of the purposes of which was to be a token of gratitude and glory to the English people themselves. If a man chooses to be illustrious, he is very likely to incur some little inconveniences himself, and entail them on his posterity. Nevertheless, his present Grace of Marlborough absolutely ignores the public claim above suggested, and (with a thrift of which even the hero of Blenheim himself did not set the example) sells tickets admitting six persons at ten shillings; if only one person enters the gate, he must pay for six; and if there are seven in company, two tickets are required to admit them. The attendants, who meet you everywhere in the park and palace, expect fees on their own private account, — their noble master pocketing the ten shillings. But, to be sure, the visitor gets

his money's worth, since it buys him the right to speak just as freely of the Duke of Marlborough as if he were the keeper of the Cremorne Gardens.[1]

Passing through a gateway on the opposite side of the quadrangle, we had before us the noble classic front of the palace, with its two projecting wings. We ascended the lofty steps of the portal, and were admitted into the entrance-hall, the height of which, from floor to ceiling, is not much less than seventy feet, being the entire elevation of the edifice. The hall is lighted by windows in the upper story, and, it being a clear, bright day, was very radiant with lofty sunshine, amid which a swallow was flitting to and fro. The ceiling was painted by Sir James Thornhill in some allegorical design (doubtless commemorative of Marlborough's victories), the purport of which I did not take the trouble to make out, — contenting myself with the general effect, which was most splendidly and effectively ornamental.

[1] The above was written two or three years ago, or more; and the Duke of that day has since transmitted his coronet to his successor, who, we understand, has adopted much more liberal arrangements. There is seldom anything to criticise or complain of, as regards the facility of obtaining admission to interesting private houses in England.

We were guided through the show-rooms by a very civil person, who allowed us to take pretty much our own time in looking at the pictures. The collection is exceedingly valuable, — many of these works of Art having been presented to the Great Duke by the crowned heads of England or the Continent. One room was all aglow with pictures by Rubens; and there were works of Raphael, and many other famous painters, any one of which would be sufficient to illustrate the meanest house that might contain it. I remember none of them, however (not being in a picture-seeing mood), so well as Vandyck's large and familiar picture of Charles I. on horseback, with a figure and face of melancholy dignity such as never by any other hand was put on canvas. Yet, on considering this face of Charles (which I find often repeated in half-lengths) and translating it from the ideal into literalism, I doubt whether the unfortunate king was really a handsome or impressive-looking man: a high, thin-ridged nose, a meagre, hatchet face, and reddish hair and beard, — these are the literal facts. It is the painter's art that has thrown such pensive and shadowy grace around him.

Blenheim

On our passage through this beautiful suite of apartments, we saw, through the vista of open doorways, a boy of ten or twelve years old coming towards us from the farther rooms. He had on a straw hat, a linen sack that had certainly been washed and rewashed for a summer or two, and gray trousers a good deal worn, —a dress, in short, which an American mother in middle station would have thought too shabby for her darling schoolboy's ordinary wear. This urchin's face was rather pale (as those of English children are apt to be, quite as often as our own), but he had pleasant eyes, an intelligent look, and an agreeable boyish manner. It was Lord Sunderland, grandson of the present Duke, and heir — though not, I think, in the direct line — of the blood of the great Marlborough, and of the title and estate.

After passing through the first suite of rooms, we were conducted through a corresponding suite on the opposite side of the entrance-hall. These latter apartments are most richly adorned with tapestries, wrought and presented to the first Duke by a sisterhood of Flemish nuns; they look like great, glowing pictures, and completely

cover the walls of the rooms. The designs purport to represent the Duke's battles and sieges; and everywhere we see the hero himself, as large as life, and as gorgeous in scarlet and gold as the holy sisters could make him, with a three-cornered hat and flowing wig, reining in his horse, and extending his leading-staff in the attitude of command. Next to Marlborough, Prince Eugene is the most prominent figure. In the way of upholstery, there can never have been anything more magnificent than these tapestries; and, considered as works of Art, they have quite as much merit as nine pictures out of ten.

One whole wing of the palace is occupied by the library, a most noble room, with a vast perspective length from end to end. Its atmosphere is brighter and more cheerful than that of most libraries: a wonderful contrast to the old college libraries of Oxford, and perhaps less sombre and suggestive of thoughtfulness than any large library ought to be; inasmuch as so many studious brains as have left their deposit on the shelves cannot have conspired without producing a very serious and ponderous result. Both walls and ceiling are white, and there are elaborate doorways and fire-

places of white marble. The floor is of oak, so highly polished that our feet slipped upon it as if it had been New England ice. At one end of the room stands a statue of Queen Anne in her royal robes, which are so admirably designed and exquisitely wrought that the spectator certainly gets a strong conception of her royal dignity; while the face of the statue, fleshy and feeble, doubtless conveys a suitable idea of her personal character.[1] The marble of this work, long as it has stood there, is as white as snow just fallen, and must have required most faithful and religious care to keep it so. As for the volumes of the library, they are wired within the cases, and turn their gilded backs upon the visitor, keeping their treasures of wit and wisdom just as intangible as if still in the unwrought mines of human thought.

I remember nothing else in the palace, except the chapel, to which we were conducted last, and where we saw a splendid monument to the first Duke and Duchess, sculptured by Rysbrach, at the cost, it is said, of forty thousand pounds. The de-

[1] In front of St. Paul's there is a statue of Queen Anne, which looks rather more majestic, I doubt not, than that fat old dame ever did. — II. 97.

sign includes the statues of the deceased dignitaries, and various allegorical flourishes, fantasies, and confusions; and beneath sleep the great Duke and his proud wife, their veritable bones and dust, and probably all the Marlboroughs that have since died. It is not quite a comfortable idea that these mouldy ancestors still inhabit, after their fashion, the house where their successors spend the passing day; but the adulation lavished upon the hero of Blenheim could not have been consummated, unless the palace of his lifetime had become likewise a stately mausoleum over his remains, — and such we felt it all to be, after gazing at his tomb.

The next business was to see the private gardens. An old Scotch under-gardener admitted us and led the way, and seemed to have a fair prospect of earning the fee all by himself; but by and by another respectable Scotchman made his appearance and took us in charge, proving to be the head-gardener in person. He was extremely intelligent and agreeable, talking both scientifically and lovingly about trees and plants, of which there is every variety capable of English cultivation. Positively, the Garden of Eden cannot have been

more beautiful than this private garden of Blenheim. It contains three hundred acres, and by the artful circumlocution of the paths, and the undulations, and the skillfully interposed clumps of trees, is made to appear limitless. The sylvan delights of a whole country are compressed into this space, as whole fields of Persian roses go to the concoction of an ounce of precious attar. The world within that garden-fence is not the same weary and dusty world with which we outside mortals are conversant; it is a finer, lovelier, more harmonious Nature; and the Great Mother lends herself kindly to the gardener's will, knowing that he will make evident the half-obliterated traits of her pristine and ideal beauty, and allow her to take all the credit and praise to herself. I doubt whether there is ever any winter within that precinct, — any clouds, except the fleecy ones of summer. The sunshine that I saw there rests upon my recollection of it as if it were eternal. The lawns and glades are like the memory of places where one has wandered when first in love.

What a good and happy life might be spent in a paradise like this! And yet, at that very moment, the besotted Duke (ah!

I have let out a secret which I meant to keep to myself; but the ten shillings must pay for all) was in that very garden (for the guide told us so, and cautioned our young people not to be too uproarious), and, if in a condition for arithmetic, was thinking of nothing nobler than how many ten-shilling tickets had that day been sold. Republican as I am, I should still love to think that noblemen lead noble lives, and that all this stately and beautiful environment may serve to elevate them a little way above the rest of us. If it fail to do so, the disgrace falls equally upon the whole race of mortals as on themselves; because it proves that no more favorable conditions of existence would eradicate our vices and weaknesses. How sad, if this be so! Even a herd of swine, eating the acorns under those magnificent oaks of Blenheim, would be cleanlier and of better habits than ordinary swine.

Well, all that I have written is pitifully meagre, as a description of Blenheim; and I hate to leave it without some more adequate expression of the noble edifice, with its rich domain, all as I saw them in that beautiful sunshine; for, if a day had been chosen out of a hundred years, it could not

have been a finer one. But I must give up the attempt; only further remarking that the finest trees here were cedars, of which I saw one — and there may have been many such — immense in girth, and not less than three centuries old. I likewise saw a vast heap of laurel, two hundred feet in circumference, all growing from one root; and the gardener offered to show us another growth of twice that stupendous size. If the Great Duke himself had been buried in that spot, his heroic heart could not have been the seed of a more plentiful crop of laurels.

We now went back to the Black Bear, and sat down to a cold collation, of which we ate abundantly, and drank (in the good old English fashion) a due proportion of various delightful liquors. A stranger in England, in his rambles to various quarters of the country, may learn little in regard to wines (for the ordinary English taste is simple, though sound, in that particular), but he makes acquaintance with more varieties of hop and malt liquor than he previously supposed to exist. I remember a sort of foaming stuff, called hop-champagne, which is very vivacious, and appears to be a hybrid between ale and bottled

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cider. Another excellent tipple for warm weather is concocted by mixing brown-stout or bitter ale with ginger-beer, the foam of which stirs up the heavier liquor from its depths, forming a compound of singular vivacity and sufficient body. But of all things ever brewed from malt (unless it be the Trinity Ale of Cambridge, which I drank long afterwards, and which Barry Cornwall has celebrated in immortal verse), commend me to the Archdeacon, as the Oxford scholars call it, in honor of the jovial dignitary who first taught these erudite worthies how to brew their favorite nectar. John Barleycorn has given his very heart to this admirable liquor; it is a superior kind of ale, the Prince of Ales, with a richer flavor and a mightier spirit than you can find elsewhere in this weary world. Much have we been strengthened and encouraged by the potent blood of the Archdeacon!

A few days after our excursion to Blenheim, the same party set forth, in two flies, on a tour to some other places of interest in the neighborhood of Oxford. It was again a delightful day; and, in truth, every day, of late, had been so pleasant that it seemed as if each must be the very last of

such perfect weather; and yet the long succession had given us confidence in as many more to come. The climate of England has been shamefully maligned, its sulkiness and asperities are not nearly so offensive as Englishmen tell us (their climate being the only attribute of their country which they never overvalue); and the really good summer-weather is the very kindest and sweetest that the world knows.

We first drove to the village of Cumnor, about six miles from Oxford, and alighted at the entrance of the church. Here, while waiting for the keys, we looked at an old wall of the churchyard, piled up of loose gray stones, which are said to have once formed a portion of Cumnor Hall, celebrated in Mickle's ballad and Scott's romance. The hall must have been in very close vicinity to the church, — not more than twenty yards off; and I waded through the long, dewy grass of the churchyard, and tried to peep over the wall, in hopes to discover some tangible and traceable remains of the edifice. But the wall was just too high to be overlooked, and difficult to clamber over without tumbling down some of the stones; so I took the word of one of our party, who had been here be-

fore, that there is nothing interesting on the other side. The churchyard is in rather a neglected state, and seems not to have been mown for the benefit of the parson's cow; it contains a good many gravestones, of which I remember only some upright memorials of slate to individuals of the name of Tabbs.

Soon a woman arrived with the key of the church-door, and we entered the simple old edifice, which has the pavement of lettered tombstones, the sturdy pillars and low arches, and other ordinary characteristics of an English country church. One or two pews, probably those of the gentle folk of the neighborhood, were better furnished than the rest, but all in a modest style. Near the high altar, in the holiest place, there is an oblong, angular, ponderous tomb of blue marble, built against the wall, and surmounted by a carved canopy of the same material; and over the tomb, and beneath the canopy, are two monumental brasses, such as we oftener see inlaid into a church pavement. On these brasses are engraved the figures of a gentleman in armor, and a lady in an antique garb, each about a foot high, devoutly kneeling in prayer; and there is a long Latin inscrip-

tion likewise cut into the enduring brass, bestowing the highest eulogies on the character of Anthony Forster, who, with his virtuous dame, lies buried beneath this tombstone. His is the knightly figure that kneels above; and if Sir Walter Scott ever saw this tomb, he must have had an even greater than common disbelief in laudatory epitaphs, to venture on depicting Anthony Forster in such hues as blacken him in the romance. For my part, I read the inscription in full faith, and believe the poor deceased gentleman to be a much-wronged individual, with good grounds for bringing an action of slander in the courts above.

But the circumstance, lightly as we treat it, has its serious moral. What nonsense it is, this anxiety, which so worries us about our good fame, or our bad fame, after death! If it were of the slightest real moment, our reputations would have been placed by Providence more in our own power, and less in other people's, than we now find them to be. If poor Anthony Forster happens to have met Sir Walter in the other world, I doubt whether he has ever thought it worth while to complain of the latter's misrepresentations.

We did not remain long in the church, as it contains nothing else of interest; and, driving through the village, we passed a pretty large and rather antique-looking inn, bearing the sign of the Bear and Ragged Staff. It could not be so old, however, by at least a hundred years, as Giles Gosling's time; nor is there any other object to remind the visitor of the Elizabethan age, unless it be a few ancient cottages, that are perhaps of still earlier date. Cumnor is not nearly so large a village, nor a place of such mark, as one anticipates from its romantic and legendary fame; but, being still inaccessible by railway, it has retained more of a sylvan character than we often find in English country towns. In this retired neighborhood the road is narrow and bordered with grass, and sometimes interrupted by gates; the hedges grow in unpruned luxuriance; there is not that close-shaven neatness and trimness that characterize the ordinary English landscape. The whole scene conveys the idea of seclusion and remoteness. We met no travelers, whether on foot or otherwise.

I cannot very distinctly trace out this day's peregrinations; but, after leaving

Cumnor a few miles behind us, I think we came to a ferry over the Thames, where an old woman served as ferryman, and pulled a boat across by means of a rope stretching from shore to shore. Our two vehicles being thus placed on the other side, we resumed our drive, — first glancing, however, at the old woman's antique cottage, with its stone floor, and the circular settle round the kitchen fireplace, which was quite in the mediæval English style.

We next stopped at Stanton Harcourt, where we were received at the parsonage with a hospitality which we should take delight in describing, if it were allowable to make public acknowledgment of the private and personal kindnesses which we never failed to find ready for our needs. An American in an English house will soon adopt the opinion that the English are the very kindest people on earth, and will retain that idea as long, at least, as he remains on the inner side of the threshold. Their magnetism is of a kind that repels strongly while you keep beyond a certain limit, but attracts as forcibly if you get within the magic line.

It was at this place, if I remember right,

that I heard a gentleman ask a friend of mine whether he was the author of "The Red Letter A;" and, after some consideration (for he did not seem to recognize his own book, at first, under this improved title), our countryman responded doubtfully, that he believed so. The gentleman proceeded to inquire whether our friend had spent much time in America, — evidently thinking that he must have been caught young, and have had a tincture of English breeding, at least, if not birth, to speak the language so tolerably, and appear so much like other people. This insular narrowness is exceedingly queer, and of very frequent occurrence, and is quite as much a characteristic of men of education and culture as of clowns.

Stanton Harcourt is a very curious old place. It was formerly the seat of the ancient family of Harcourt, which now has its principal abode at Nuneham Courtney, a few miles off. The parsonage is a relic of the family mansion, or castle, other portions of which are close at hand; for, across the garden, rise two gray towers, both of them picturesquely venerable, and interesting for more than their antiquity. One of these towers, in its entire capacity,

from height to depth, constituted the kitchen of the ancient castle, and is still used for domestic purposes, although it has not, nor ever had, a chimney; or, we might rather say, it is itself one vast chimney, with a hearth of thirty feet square, and a flue and aperture of the same size. There are two huge fireplaces within, and the interior walls of the tower are blackened with the smoke that for centuries used to gush forth from them, and climb upward, seeking an exit through some wide air-holes in the conical roof, full seventy feet above. These lofty openings were capable of being so arranged, with reference to the wind, that the cooks are said to have been seldom troubled by the smoke; and here, no doubt, they were accustomed to roast oxen whole, with as little fuss and ado as a modern cook would roast a fowl. The inside of the tower is very dim and sombre (being nothing but rough stone walls, lighted only from the apertures above mentioned), and has still a pungent odor of smoke and soot, the reminiscence of the fires and feasts of generations that have passed away. Methinks the extremest range of domestic economy lies between an American cooking-stove and the ancient

kitchen, seventy dizzy feet in height and all one fireplace, of Stanton Harcourt.

Now — the place being without a parallel in England, and therefore necessarily beyond the experience of an American — it is somewhat remarkable that, while we stood gazing at this kitchen, I was haunted and perplexed by an idea that somewhere or other I had seen just this strange spectacle before. The height, the blackness, the dismal void, before my eyes, seemed as familiar as the decorous neatness of my grandmother's kitchen; only my unaccountable memory of the scene was lighted up with an image of lurid fires blazing all round the dim interior circuit of the tower. I had never before had so pertinacious an attack, as I could not but suppose it, of that odd state of mind wherein we fitfully and teasingly remember some previous scene or incident, of which the one now passing appears to be but the echo and reduplication. Though the explanation of the mystery did not for some time occur to me, I may as well conclude the matter here. In a letter of Pope's, addressed to the Duke of Buckingham, there is an account of Stanton Harcourt (as I now find, although the name is not mentioned),

where he resided while translating a part of the "Iliad." It is one of the most admirable pieces of description in the language, — playful and picturesque, with fine touches of humorous pathos, — and conveys as perfect a picture as ever was drawn of a decayed English country-house; and among other rooms, most of which have since crumbled down and disappeared, he dashes off the grim aspect of this kitchen, — which, moreover, he peoples with witches, engaging Satan himself as head cook, who stirs the infernal caldrons that seethe and bubble over the fires. This letter, and others relative to his abode here, were very familiar to my earlier reading, and, remaining still fresh at the bottom of my memory, caused the weird and ghostly sensation that came over me on beholding the real spectacle that had formerly been made so vivid to my imagination.

Our next visit was to the church, which stands close by, and is quite as ancient as the remnants of the castle. In a chapel or side aisle, dedicated to the Harcourts, are found some very interesting family monuments, — and among them, recumbent on a tombstone, the figure of an armed knight of the Lancastrian party, who was

slain in the Wars of the Roses. His features, dress, and armor are painted in colors, still wonderfully fresh, and there still blushes the symbol of the Red Rose, denoting the faction for which he fought and died. His head rests on a marble or alabaster helmet; and on the tomb lies the veritable helmet, it is to be presumed, which he wore in battle, — a ponderous iron case, with the visor complete, and remnants of the gilding that once covered it. The crest is a large peacock, not of metal, but of wood. Very possibly, this helmet was but an heraldic adornment of his tomb; and, indeed, it seems strange that it has not been stolen before now, especially in Cromwell's time, when knightly tombs were little respected, and when armor was in request. However, it is needless to dispute with the dead knight about the identity of his iron pot, and we may as well allow it to be the very same that so often gave him the headache in his lifetime. Leaning against the wall, at the foot of the tomb, is the shaft of a spear, with a wofully tattered and utterly faded banner appended to it, — the knightly banner beneath which he marshaled his followers in the field. As it was absolutely falling to

pieces, I tore off one little bit, no bigger than a finger-nail, and put it into my waistcoat pocket; but seeking it subsequently, it was not to be found.

On the opposite side of the little chapel, two or three yards from this tomb, is another monument, on which lie, side by side, one of the same knightly race of Harcourts and his lady. The tradition of the family is, that this knight was the standard-bearer of Henry of Richmond in the Battle of Bosworth Field; and a banner, supposed to be the same that he carried, now droops over his effigy. It is just such a colorless silk rag as the one already described. The knight has the order of the Garter on his knee, and the lady wears it on her left arm, — an odd place enough for a garter; but, if worn in its proper locality, it could not be decorously visible. The complete preservation and good condition of these statues, even to the minutest adornment of the sculpture, and their very noses, — the most vulnerable part of a marble man, as of a living one, — are miraculous. Except in Westminster Abbey, among the chapels of the kings, I have seen none so well preserved. Perhaps they owe it to the loyalty of Oxfordshire, diffused through-

out its neighborhood by the influence of the University, during the great Civil War and the rule of the Parliament. It speaks well, too, for the upright and kindly character of this old family, that the peasantry, among whom they had lived for ages, did not desecrate their tombs, when it might have been done with impunity.

There are other and more recent memorials of the Harcourts, one of which is the tomb of the last lord, who died about a hundred years ago. His figure, like those of his ancestors, lies on the top of his tomb, clad, not in armor, but in his robes as a peer. The title is now extinct, but the family survives in a younger branch, and still holds this patrimonial estate, though they have long since quitted it as a residence.

We next went to see the ancient fish-ponds appertaining to the mansion, and which used to be of vast dietary importance to the family in Catholic times, and when fish was not otherwise attainable. There are two or three, or more, of these reservoirs, one of which is of very respectable size, — large enough, indeed, to be really a picturesque object, with its grass-green borders, and the trees drooping over it, and

the towers of the castle and the church reflected within the weed-grown depths of its smooth mirror. A sweet fragrance, as it were, of ancient time and present quiet and seclusion was breathing all around; the sunshine of to-day had a mellow charm of antiquity in its brightness. These ponds are said still to breed abundance of such fish as love deep and quiet waters; but I saw only some minnows, and one or two snakes, which were lying among the weeds on the top of the water, sunning and bathing themselves at once.

I mentioned that there were two towers remaining of the old castle: the one containing the kitchen we have already visited; the other, still more interesting, is next to be described. It is some seventy feet high, gray and reverend, but in excellent repair, though I could not perceive that anything had been done to renovate it. The basement story was once the family chapel, and is, of course, still a consecrated spot. At one corner of the tower is a circular turret, within which a narrow staircase, with worn steps of stone, winds round and round as it climbs upward, giving access to a chamber on each floor, and finally emerging on the battlemented roof. Ascending this

turret stair, and arriving at the third story, we entered a chamber, not large, though occupying the whole area of the tower, and lighted by a window on each side. It was wainscoted from floor to ceiling with dark oak, and had a little fireplace in one of the corners. The window-panes were small and set in lead. The curiosity of this room is, that it was once the residence of Pope, and that he here wrote a considerable part of the translation of Homer, and likewise, no doubt, the admirable letters to which I have referred above. The room once contained a record by himself, scratched with a diamond on one of the window-panes (since removed for safe-keeping to Nuneham Courtney, where it was shown me), purporting that he had here finished the fifth book of the "Iliad" on such a day.

A poet has a fragrance about him, such as no other human being is gifted withal; it is indestructible, and clings forevermore to everything that he has touched. I was not impressed, at Blenheim, with any sense that the mighty Duke still haunted the palace that was created for him; but here, after a century and a half, we are still conscious of the presence of that decrepit

little figure of Queen Anne's time, although he was merely a casual guest in the old tower, during one or two summer months. However brief the time and slight the connection, his spirit cannot be exorcised so long as the tower stands. In my mind, moreover, Pope, or any other person with an available claim, is right in adhering to the spot, dead or alive; for I never saw a chamber that I should like better to inhabit, — so comfortably small, in such a safe and inaccessible seclusion, and with a varied landscape from each window. One of them looks upon the church, close at hand, and down into the green churchyard, extending almost to the foot of the tower; the others have views wide and far, over a gently undulating tract of country. If desirous of a loftier elevation, about a dozen more steps of the turret stair will bring the occupant to the summit of the tower, — where Pope used to come, no doubt, in the summer evenings, and peep — poor little shrimp that he was! — through the embrasures of the battlement.

From Stanton Harcourt we drove — I forget how far — to a point where a boat was waiting for us upon the Thames, or some other stream; for I am ashamed to

confess my ignorance of the precise geographical whereabout. We were, at any rate, some miles above Oxford, and, I should imagine, pretty near one of the sources of England's mighty river. It was little more than wide enough for the boat, with extended oars, to pass, — shallow, too, and bordered with bulrushes and water-weeds, which, in some places, quite overgrew the surface of the river from bank to bank. The shores were flat and meadow-like, and sometimes, the boatman told us, are overflowed by the rise of the stream. The water looked clean and pure, but not particularly transparent, though enough so to show us that the bottom is very much weed-grown; and I was told that the weed is an American production, brought to England with importations of timber, and now threatening to choke up the Thames and other English rivers. I wonder it does not try its obstructive powers upon the Merrimack, the Connecticut, or the Hudson, — not to speak of the St. Lawrence or the Mississippi!

It was an open boat, with cushioned seats astern, comfortably accommodating our party; the day continued sunny and warm, and perfectly still; the boatman,

well trained to his business, managed the oars skillfully and vigorously: and we went down the stream quite as swiftly as it was desirable to go, the scene being so pleasant, and the passing hours so thoroughly agreeable. The river grew a little wider and deeper, perhaps, as we glided on, but was still an inconsiderable stream: for it had a good deal more than a hundred miles to meander through before it should bear fleets on its bosom, and reflect palaces and towers and Parliament houses and dingy and sordid piles of various structure, as it rolled to and fro with the tide, dividing London asunder. Not, in truth, that I ever saw any edifice whatever reflected in its turbid breast, when the sylvan stream, as we beheld it now, is swollen into the Thames at London.

Once, on our voyage, we had to land, while the boatman and some other persons drew our skiff round some rapids, which we could not otherwise have passed; another time, the boat went through a lock. We, meanwhile, stepped ashore to examine the ruins of the old nunnery of Godstowe, where Fair Rosamond secluded herself, after being separated from her royal lover. There is a long line of ruinous wall, and a

shattered tower at one of the angles; the whole much ivy-grown, — brimming over, indeed, with clustering ivy, which is rooted inside of the walls. The nunnery is now, I believe, held in lease by the city of Oxford, which has converted its precincts into a barnyard. The gate was under lock and key, so that we could merely look at the outside, and soon resumed our places in the boat.

At three o'clock or thereabouts (or sooner or later, — for I took little heed of time, and only wished that these delightful wanderings might last forever) we reached Folly Bridge, at Oxford. Here we took possession of a spacious barge, with a house in it, and a comfortable dining-room or drawing-room within the house, and a level roof, on which we could sit at ease, or dance if so inclined. These barges are common at Oxford, — some very splendid ones being owned by the students of the different colleges, or by clubs. They are drawn by horses, like canal-boats; and a horse being attached to our own barge, he trotted off at a reasonable pace, and we slipped through the water behind him, with a gentle and pleasant motion, which, save for the constant vicissitude of cultivated

scenery, was like no motion at all. It was life without the trouble of living; nothing was ever more quietly agreeable. In this happy state of mind and body we gazed at Christ Church meadows, as we passed, and at the receding spires and towers of Oxford, and on a good deal of pleasant variety along the banks: young men rowing or fishing; troops of naked boys bathing, as if this were Arcadia, in the simplicity of the Golden Age; country-houses, cottages, water-side inns, all with something fresh about them, as not being sprinkled with the dust of the highway. We were a large party now; for a number of additional guests had joined us at Folly Bridge, and we comprised poets, novelists, scholars, sculptors, painters, architects, men and women of renown, dear friends, genial, outspoken, open-hearted Englishmen, — all voyaging onward together, like the wise ones of Gotham in a bowl. I remember not a single annoyance, except, indeed, that a swarm of wasps came aboard of us and alighted on the head of one of our young gentlemen, attracted by the scent of the pomatum which he had been rubbing into his hair. He was the only victim, and his small trouble the one little flaw in our

day's felicity, to put us in mind that we were mortal.

Meanwhile, a table had been laid in the interior of our barge, and spread with cold ham, cold fowl, cold pigeon-pie, cold beef, and other substantial cheer, such as the English love, and Yankees too, — besides tarts, and cakes, and pears, and plums, — not forgetting, of course, a goodly provision of port, sherry, and champagne, and bitter ale, which is like mother's milk to an Englishman, and soon grows equally acceptable to his American cousin. By the time these matters had been properly attended to, we had arrived at that part of the Thames which passes by Nuneham Courtney, a fine estate belonging to the Harcourts, and the present residence of the family. Here we landed, and, climbing a steep slope from the river-side, paused a moment or two to look at an architectural object, called the Carfax, the purport of which I do not well understand. Thence we proceeded onward, through the loveliest park and woodland scenery I ever saw, and under as beautiful a declining sunshine as heaven ever shed over earth, to the stately mansion-house.

As we here cross a private threshold,

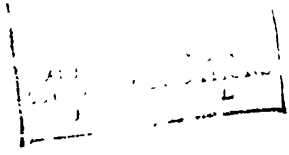
it is not allowable to pursue my feeble narrative of this delightful day with the same freedom as heretofore; so, perhaps, I may as well bring it to a close. I may mention, however, that I saw the library, a fine, large apartment, hung round with portraits of eminent literary men, principally of the last century, most of whom were familiar guests of the Harcourts. The house itself is about eighty years old, and is built in the classic style, as if the family had been anxious to diverge as far as possible from the Gothic picturesqueness of their old abode at Stanton Harcourt. The grounds were laid out in part by Capability Brown, and seemed to me even more beautiful than those of Blenheim. Mason the poet, a friend of the house, gave the design of a portion of the garden. Of the whole place I will not be niggardly of my rude Transatlantic praise, but be bold to say that it appeared to me as perfect as anything earthly can be, — utterly and entirely finished, as if the years and generations had done all that the hearts and minds of the successive owners could contrive for a spot they dearly loved. Such homes as Nuneham Courtney are among the splendid results of long hereditary possession; and

we Republicans, whose households melt away like new-fallen snow in a spring morning, must content ourselves with our many counterbalancing advantages, — for this one, so apparently desirable to the far-projecting selfishness of our nature, we are certain never to attain.

It must not be supposed, nevertheless, that Nuneham Courtney is one of the great show-places of England. It is merely a fair specimen of the better class of country-seats, and has a hundred rivals, and many superiors, in the features of beauty, and expansive, manifold, redundant comfort, which most impressed me. A moderate man might be content with such a home, — that is all.

And now I take leave of Oxford without even an attempt to describe it, — there being no literary faculty, attainable or conceivable by me, which can avail to put it adequately, or even tolerably, upon paper. It must remain its own sole expression; and those whose sad fortune it may be never to behold it have no better resource than to dream about gray, weather-stained, ivy-grown edifices, wrought with quaint Gothic ornament, and standing around grassy quadrangles, where cloistered walks

A Vital Link Oxford



have echoed to the quiet footsteps of twenty generations, — lawns and gardens of luxurious repose, shadowed with canopies of foliage, and lit up with sunny glimpses through archways of great boughs, — spires, towers, and turrets, each with its history and legend, — dimly magnificent chapels, with painted windows of rare beauty and brilliantly diversified hues, creating an atmosphere of richest gloom, —vast college halls, high-windowed, oaken-paneled, and hung round with portraits of the men, in every age, whom the university has nurtured to be illustrious, — long vistas of alcoved libraries, where the wisdom and learned folly of all time is shelved, — kitchens (we throw in this feature by way of ballast, and because it would not be English Oxford without its beef and beer), with huge fireplaces, capable of roasting a hundred joints at once, — and cavernous cellars, where rows of piled-up hogsheads seethe and fume with that mighty malt-liquor which is the true milk of Alma Mater: make all these things vivid in your dream, and you will never know nor believe how inadequate is the result to represent even the merest outside of Oxford.

We feel a genuine reluctance to conclude

this article without making our grateful acknowledgments, by name, to a gentleman whose overflowing kindness was the main condition of all our sight-seeings and enjoyments. Delightful as will always be our recollection of Oxford and its neighborhood, we partly suspect that it owes much of its happy coloring to the genial medium through which the objects were presented to us, — to the kindly magic of a hospitality unsurpassed, within our experience, in the quality of making the guest contented with his host, with himself, and everything about him. He has inseparably mingled his image with our remembrance of the Spires of Oxford.

VIII.

SOME OF THE HAUNTS OF BURNS

We left Carlisle at a little past eleven, and within the half hour were at Gretna Green. Thence we rushed onward into Scotland through a flat and dreary tract of country, consisting mainly of desert and bog, where probably the moss-troopers were accustomed to take refuge after their raids into England. Anon, however, the hills hove themselves up to view, occasionally attaining a height which might almost be called mountainous. In about two hours we reached Dumfries, and alighted at the station there.

Chill as the Scottish summer is reputed to be, we found it an awfully hot day, not a whit less so than the day before; but we sturdily adventured through the burning sunshine up into the town, inquiring our way to the residence of Burns. The street leading from the station is called Shakespeare Street; and at its farther extremity we read "Burns Street" on a corner-house,

— the avenue thus designated having been formerly known as "Mill-Hole Brae." It is a vile lane, paved with small, hard stones from side to side, and bordered by cottages or mean houses of whitewashed stone, joining one to another along the whole length of the street. With not a tree, of course, or a blade of grass between the paving-stones, the narrow lane was as hot as Tophet, and reeked with a genuine Scotch odor, being infested with unwashed children, and altogether in a state of chronic filth; although some women seemed to be hopelessly scrubbing the thresholds of their wretched dwellings. I never saw an outskirt of a town less fit for a poet's residence, or in which it would be more miserable for any man of cleanly predilections to spend his days.

We asked for Burns's dwelling; and a woman pointed across the street to a two-story house, built of stone, and whitewashed, like its neighbors, but perhaps of a little more respectable aspect than most of them, though I hesitate in saying so. It was not a separate structure, but under the same continuous roof with the next. There was an inscription on the door, bearing no reference to Burns, but indicating that the

house was now occupied by a ragged or industrial school. On knocking, we were instantly admitted by a servant-girl, who smiled intelligently when we told our errand, and showed us into a low and very plain parlor, not more than twelve or fifteen feet square. A young woman, who seemed to be a teacher in the school, soon appeared, and told us that this had been Burns's usual sitting-room, and that he had written many of his songs here.

She then led us up a narrow staircase into a little bedchamber over the parlor. Connecting with it, there is a very small room, or windowed closet, which Burns used as a study; and the bedchamber itself was the one where he slept in his later lifetime, and in which he died at last. Altogether, it is an exceedingly unsuitable place for a pastoral and rural poet to live or die in, — even more unsatisfactory than Shakespeare's house, which has a certain homely picturesqueness that contrasts favorably with the suburban sordidness of the abode before us. The narrow lane, the paving-stones, and the contiguity of wretched hovels are depressing to remember; and the steam of them (such is our human weakness) might almost make the poet's memory less fragrant.

As already observed, it was an intolerably hot day. After leaving the house, we found our way into the principal street of the town, which, it may be fair to say, is of very different aspect from the wretched outskirt above described. Entering a hotel (in which, as a Dumfries guide-book assured us, Prince Charles Edward had once spent a night), we rested and refreshed ourselves, and then set forth in quest of the mausoleum of Burns.

Coming to St. Michael's Church, we saw a man digging a grave, and, scrambling out of the hole, he let us into the churchyard, which was crowded full of monuments. Their general shape and construction are peculiar to Scotland, being a perpendicular tablet of marble or other stone, within a framework of the same material, somewhat resembling the frame of a looking-glass; and, all over the churchyard, these sepulchral memorials rise to the height of ten, fifteen, or twenty feet, forming quite an imposing collection of monuments, but inscribed with names of small general significance. It was easy, indeed, to ascertain the rank of those who slept below; for in Scotland it is the custom to put the occupation of the buried personage (as "Skin-

ner," "Shoemaker," "Flesher") on his tombstone. As another peculiarity, wives are buried under their maiden names, instead of those of their husbands, thus giving a disagreeable impression that the married pair have bidden each other an eternal farewell on the edge of the grave.

There was a foot-path through this crowded churchyard, sufficiently well worn to guide us to the grave of Burns; but a woman followed behind us, who, it appeared kept the key of the mausoleum, and was privileged to show it to strangers. The monument is a sort of Grecian temple, with pilasters and a dome, covering a space of about twenty feet square. It was formerly open to all the inclemencies of the Scotch atmosphere, but is now protected and shut in by large squares of rough glass, each pane being of the size of one whole side of the structure. The woman unlocked the door, and admitted us into the interior. Inlaid into the floor of the mausoleum is the gravestone of Burns,—the very same that was laid over his grave by Jean Armour, before this monument was built. Displayed against the surrounding wall is a marble statue of Burns at the plough, with the Genius of Caledonia sum-

moning the ploughman to turn poet. Methought it was not a very successful piece of work; for the plough was better sculptured than the man, and the man, though heavy and cloddish, was more effective than the goddess. Our guide informed us that an old man of ninety, who knew Burns, certifies this statue to be very like the original.

The bones of the poet, and of Jean Armour, and of some of their children, lie in the vault over which we stood. Our guide (who was intelligent, in her own plain way, and very agreeable to talk withal) said that the vault was opened about three weeks ago, on occasion of the burial of the eldest son of Burns. The poet's bones were disturbed, and the dry skull, once so brimming over with powerful thought and bright and tender fantasies, was taken away, and kept for several days by a Dumfries doctor. It has since been deposited in a new leaden coffin, and restored to the vault. We learned that there is a surviving daughter of Burns's eldest son, and daughters likewise of the two younger sons, — and, besides these, an illegitimate posterity by the eldest son, who appears to have been of disreputable life in his

younger days. He inherited his father's failings, with some faint shadow, I have also understood, of the great qualities which have made the world tender of his father's vices and weaknesses.

We listened readily enough to this paltry gossip, but found that it robbed the poet's memory of some of the reverence that was its due. Indeed, this talk over his grave had very much the same tendency and effect as the home-scene of his life, which we had been visiting just previously. Beholding his poor, mean dwelling and its surroundings, and picturing his outward life and earthly manifestations from these, one does not so much wonder that the people of that day should have failed to recognize all that was admirable and immortal in a disreputable, drunken, shabbily clothed, and shabbily housed man, consorting with associates of damaged character, and, as his only ostensible occupation, gauging the whiskey, which he too often tasted. Siding with Burns, as we needs must, in his plea against the world, let us try to do the world a little justice too. It is far easier to know and honor a poet when his fame has taken shape in the spotlessness of marble than when the ac-

tual man comes staggering before you, besmeared with the sordid stains of his daily life. For my part, I chiefly wonder that his recognition dawned so brightly while he was still living. There must have been something very grand in his immediate presence, some strangely impressive characteristic in his natural behavior, to have caused him to seem like a demigod so soon.

As we went back through the churchyard, we saw a spot where nearly four hundred inhabitants of Dumfries were buried during the cholera year; and also some curious old monuments, with raised letters, the inscriptions on which were not sufficiently legible to induce us to puzzle them out; but, I believe, they mark the resting-places of old Covenanters, some of whom were killed by Claverhouse and his fellow-ruffians.

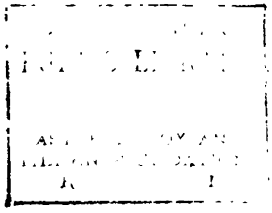
St. Michael's Church is of red freestone, and was built about a hundred years ago, on an old Catholic foundation. Our guide admitted us into it, and showed us, in the porch, a very pretty little marble figure of a child asleep, with a drapery over the lower part, from beneath which appeared its two baby feet. It was truly a sweet

little statue; and the woman told us that it represented a child of the sculptor, and that the baby (here still in its marble infancy) had died more than twenty-six years ago. "Many ladies," she said, "especially such as had ever lost a child, had shed tears over it." It was very pleasant to think of the sculptor bestowing the best of his genius and art to re-create his tender child in stone, and to make the representation as soft and sweet as the original; but the conclusion of the story has something that jars with our awakened sensibilities. A gentleman from London had seen the statue, and was so much delighted with it that he bought it of the father-artist, after it had lain above a quarter of a century in the church-porch. So this was not the real, tender image that came out of the father's heart; he had sold that truest one for a hundred guineas, and sculptured this mere copy to replace it. The first figure was entirely naked in its earthly and spiritual innocence. The copy, as I have said above, has a drapery over the lower limbs. But, after all, if we come to the truth of the matter, the sleeping baby may be as fitly reposited in the drawing-room of a connoisseur as in a cold and dreary church-porch.

We went into the church, and found it very plain and naked, without altar decorations, and having its floor quite covered with unsightly wooden pews. The woman led us to a pew, cornering on one of the side aisles, and, telling us that it used to be Burns's family pew, showed us his seat, which is in the corner by the aisle. It is so situated, that a sturdy pillar hid him from the pulpit, and from the minister's eye; "for Robin was no great friends with the ministers," said she. This touch — his seat behind the pillar, and Burns himself nodding in sermon-time, or keenly observant of profane things — brought him before us to the life. In the corner-seat of the next pew, right before Burns, and not more than two feet off, sat the young lady on whom the poet saw that unmentionable parasite, which he has immortalized in song. We were ungenerous enough to ask the lady's name, but the good woman could not tell it. This was the last thing which we saw in Dumfries worthy of record; and it ought to be noted that our guide refused some money which my companion offered her, because I had already paid her what she deemed sufficient.

At the railway-station we spent more

Robert Burns



than a weary hour, waiting for the train, which at last came up, and took us to Mauchline. We got into an omnibus, the only conveyance to be had, and drove about a mile to the village, where we established ourselves at the Loudoun Hotel, one of the veriest country inns which we have found in Great Britain. The town of Mauchline, a place more redolent of Burns than almost any other, consists of a street or two of contiguous cottages, mostly white-washed, and with thatched roofs. It has nothing sylvan or rural in the immediate village, and is as ugly a place as mortal man could contrive to make, or to render uglier through a succession of untidy generations. The fashion of paving the village street, and patching one shabby house on the gable-end of another, quite shuts out all verdure and pleasantness; but, I presume, we are not likely to see a more genuine old Scotch village, such as they used to be in Burns's time, and long before, than this of Mauchline. The church stands about midway up the street, and is built of red freestone, very simple in its architecture, with a square tower and pinnacles. In this sacred edifice, and its churchyard, was the scene of one of Burns's most characteristic productions, "The Holy Fair."

Almost directly opposite its gate, across the village street, stands Posie Nansie's inn, where the "Jolly Beggars" congregated. The latter is a two-story, red-stone, thatched house, looking old, but by no means venerable, like a drunken patriarch. It has small, old-fashioned windows, and may well have stood for centuries, — though, seventy or eighty years ago, when Burns was conversant with it, I should fancy it might have been something better than a beggars' alehouse. The whole town of Mauchline looks rusty and time-worn, — even the newer houses, of which there are several, being shadowed and darkened by the general aspect of the place. When we arrived, all the wretched little dwellings seemed to have belched forth their inhabitants into the warm summer evening: everybody was chatting with everybody, on the most familiar terms; the bare-legged children gamboled or quarreled uproariously, and came freely, moreover, and looked into the window of our parlor. When we ventured out, we were followed by the gaze of the old town: people standing in their doorways, old women popping their heads from the chamber-windows, and stalwart men — idle on Saturday at e'en, after their week's

hard labor — clustering at the street-corners, merely to stare at our unpretending selves. Except in some remote little town of Italy (where, besides, the inhabitants had the intelligible stimulus of beggary), I have never been honored with nearly such an amount of public notice.

The next forenoon my companion put me to shame by attending church, after vainly exhorting me to do the like; and it being Sacrament Sunday, and my poor friend being wedged into the farther end of a closely filled pew, he was forced to stay through the preaching of four several sermons, and came back perfectly exhausted and desperate. He was somewhat consoled, however, on finding that he had witnessed a spectacle of Scotch manners identical with that of Burns's "Holy Fair" on the very spot where the poet located that immortal description. By way of further conformance to the customs of the country, we ordered a sheep's head and the broth, and did penance accordingly; and at five o'clock we took a fly, and set out for Burns's farm of Moss Giel.

Moss Giel is not more than a mile from Mauchline, and the road extends over a high ridge of land, with a view of far hills

and green slopes on either side. Just before we reached the farm, the driver stopped to point out a hawthorn, growing by the wayside, which he said was Burns's "Lousie Thorn;" and I devoutly plucked a branch, although I have really forgotten where or how this illustrious shrub has been celebrated. We then turned into a rude gateway, and almost immediately came to the farm-house of Moss Giel, standing some fifty yards removed from the high-road, behind a tall hedge of hawthorn, and considerably overshadowed by trees. The house is a whitewashed stone cottage, like thousands of others in England and Scotland, with a thatched roof, on which grass and weeds have intruded a picturesque, though alien, growth. There is a door and one window in front, besides another little window that peeps out among the thatch. Close by the cottage, and extending back at right angles from it, so as to inclose the farm-yard, are two other buildings of the same size, shape, and general appearance as the house: any one of the three looks just as fit for a human habitation as the two others, and all three look still more suitable for donkey-stables and pigsties. As we drove into the farm-yard, bounded

on three sides by these three hovels, a large dog began to bark at us; and some women and children made their appearance, but seemed to demur about admitting us, because the master and mistress were very religious people, and had not yet come back from the Sacrament at Mauchline.

However, it would not do to be turned back from the very threshold of Robert Burns; and as the women seemed to be merely straggling visitors, and nobody, at all events, had a right to send us away, we went into the back door, and, turning to the right, entered a kitchen. It showed a deplorable lack of housewifely neatness, and in it there were three or four children, one of whom, a girl eight or nine years old, held a baby in her arms. She proved to be the daughter of the people of the house, and gave us what leave she could to look about us. Thence we stepped across the narrow midpassage of the cottage into the only other apartment below stairs, a sitting-room, where we found a young man eating bread and cheese. He informed us that he did not live there, and had only called in to refresh himself on his way home from church. This room, like the kitchen, was

a noticeably poor one, and, besides being all that the cottage had to show for a parlor, it was a sleeping-apartment, having two beds, which might be curtained off, on occasion. The young man allowed us liberty (so far as in him lay) to go up stairs. Up we crept, accordingly; and a few steps brought us to the top of the staircase, over the kitchen, where we found the wretchedest little sleeping-chamber in the world, with a sloping roof under the thatch, and two beds spread upon the bare floor. This, most probably, was Burns's chamber; or, perhaps, it may have been that of his mother's servant-maid; and, in either case, this rude floor, at one time or another, must have creaked beneath the poet's midnight tread. On the opposite side of the passage was the door of another attic-chamber, opening which, I saw a considerable number of cheeses on the floor.

The whole house was pervaded with a frowzy smell, and also a dunghill odor; and it is not easy to understand how the atmosphere of such a dwelling can be any more agreeable or salubrious morally than it appeared to be physically. No virgin, surely, could keep a holy awe about her while stowed higgledy-piggledy with coarse-

natured rustics into this narrowness and filth. Such a habitation is calculated to make beasts of men and women; and it indicates a degree of barbarism which I did not imagine to exist in Scotland, that a tiller of broad fields, like the farmer of Mauchline, should have his abode in a pigsty. It is sad to think of anybody — not to say a poet, but any human being — sleeping, eating, thinking, praying, and spending all his home-life in this miserable hovel; but, methinks, I never in the least knew how to estimate the miracle of Burns's genius, nor his heroic merit for being no worse man, until I thus learned the squalid hindrances amid which he developed himself. Space, a free atmosphere, and cleanliness have a vast deal to do with the possibilities of human virtue.

The biographers talk of the farm of Moss Giel as being damp and unwholesome; but I do not see why, outside of the cottage-walls, it should possess so evil a reputation. It occupies a high, broad ridge, enjoying, surely, whatever benefit can come of a breezy site, and sloping far downward before any marshy soil is reached. The high hedge, and the trees that stand beside the cottage, give it a pleasant aspect

enough to one who does not know the grimy secrets of the interior; and the summer afternoon was now so bright that I shall remember the scene with a great deal of sunshine over it.

Leaving the cottage, we drove through a field, which the driver told us was that in which Burns turned up the mouse's nest. It is the inclosure nearest to the cottage, and seems now to be a pasture, and a rather remarkably unfertile one. A little farther on, the ground was whitened with an immense number of daisies, — daisies, daisies everywhere; and in answer to my inquiry, the driver said that this was the field where Burns ran his ploughshare over the daisy. If so, the soil seems to have been consecrated to daisies by the song which he bestowed on that first immortal one. I alighted, and plucked a whole handful of these "wee, modest, crimson-tipped flowers," which will be precious to many friends in our own country as coming from Burns's farm, and being of the same race and lineage as that daisy which he turned into an amaranthine flower while seeming to destroy it.[1]

[1] SOUTHPORT, *May 10th*. The grass has been green for a month, — indeed, it has never been entirely brown,

From Moss Giel we drove through a variety of pleasant scenes, some of which were familiar to us by their connection with Burns. We skirted, too, along a portion of the estate of Auchinleck, which still belongs to the Boswell family, — the present possessor being Sir James Boswell,[1] a grandson of Johnson's friend, and son of the Sir Alexander who was killed in a duel. Our driver spoke of Sir James as a kind, free-hearted man, but addicted to horse-races and similar pastimes, and a little too familiar with the wine-cup; so that poor Bozzy's booziness would appear to have become hereditary in his ancient line. There is no male heir to the estate of Auchinleck. The portion of the lands which we saw is covered with wood and much undermined with rabbit-warrens; nor, though the territory extends over a

— and now the trees and hedges are beginning to be in foliage. Weeks ago the daisies bloomed, even in the sandy grass-plot bordering on the promenade beneath our front windows; and in the progress of the daisy, and towards its consummation, I saw the propriety of Burns's epithet, "wee, modest, *crimson-tipped* flower," — its little white petals in the bud being fringed all round with crimson, which fades into pure white when the flower blooms. — II. 419.

[1] Sir James Boswell is now dead.

large number of acres, is the income very considerable.

By and by we came to the spot where Burns saw Miss Alexander, the Lass of Ballochmyle. It was on a bridge, which (or, more probably, a bridge that has succeeded to the old one, and is made of iron) crosses from bank to bank, high in air over a deep gorge of the road; so that the young lady may have appeared to Burns like a creature between earth and sky, and compounded chiefly of celestial elements. But, in honest truth, the great charm of a woman, in Burns's eyes, was always her womanhood, and not the angelic mixture which other poets find in her.

Our driver pointed out the course taken by the Lass of Ballochmyle, through the shrubbery, to a rock on the banks of the Lugar, where it seems to be the tradition that Burns accosted her. The song implies no such interview. Lovers, of whatever condition, high or low, could desire no lovelier scene in which to breathe their vows: the river flowing over its pebbly bed, sometimes gleaming into the sunshine, sometimes hidden deep in verdure, and here and there eddying at the foot of high and precipitous cliffs. This beautiful

estate of Ballochmyle is still held by the family of Alexanders, to whom Burns's song has given renown on cheaper terms than any other set of people ever attained it. How slight the tenure seems! A young lady happened to walk out, one summer afternoon, and crossed the path of a neighboring farmer, who celebrated the little incident in four or five warm, rude, — at least, not refined, though rather ambitious, — and somewhat ploughman-like verses. Burns has written hundreds of better things; but henceforth, for centuries, that maiden has free admittance into the dream-land of Beautiful Women, and she and all her race are famous. I should like to know the present head of the family, and ascertain what value, if any, the members of it put upon the celebrity thus won.

We passed through Catrine, known hereabouts as "the clean village of Scotland." Certainly, as regards the point indicated, it has greatly the advantage of Mauchline, whither we now returned without seeing anything else worth writing about.

There was a rain-storm during the night, and, in the morning, the rusty, old, sloping street of Mauchline was glistening with

wet, while frequent showers came spattering down. The intense heat of many days past was exchanged for a chilly atmosphere, much more suitable to a stranger's idea of what Scotch temperature ought to be. We found, after breakfast, that the first train northward had already gone by, and that we must wait till nearly two o'clock for the next. I merely ventured out once, during the forenoon, and took a brief walk through the village, in which I have left little to describe. Its chief business appears to be the manufacture of snuff-boxes. There are perhaps five or six shops, or more, including those licensed to sell only tea and tobacco; the best of them have the characteristics of village stores in the United States, dealing in a small way with an extensive variety of articles. I peeped into the open gateway of the churchyard, and saw that the ground was absolutely stuffed with dead people, and the surface crowded with gravestones, both perpendicular and horizontal. All Burns's old Mauchline acquaintance are doubtless there, and the Armours among them, except Bonny Jean, who sleeps by her poet's side. The family of Armour is now extinct in Mauchline.

Arriving at the railway-station, we found a tall, elderly, comely gentleman walking to and fro and waiting for the train. He proved to be a Mr. Alexander, — it may fairly be presumed the Alexander of Ballochmyle, a blood relation of the lovely lass. Wonderful efficacy of a poet's verse, that could shed a glory from Long Ago on this old gentleman's white hair! These Alexanders, by the by, are not an old family on the Ballochmyle estate; the father of the lass having made a fortune in trade, and established himself as the first landed proprietor of his name in these parts. The original family was named Whitefoord.

Our ride to Ayr presented nothing very remarkable; and, indeed, a cloudy and rainy day takes the varnish off the scenery, and causes a woful diminution in the beauty and impressiveness of everything we see. Much of our way lay along a flat, sandy level, in a southerly direction. We reached Ayr in the midst of hopeless rain, and drove to the King's Arms Hotel. In the intervals of showers I took peeps at the town, which appeared to have many modern or modern-fronted edifices; although there are likewise tall, gray, gabled, and quaint-looking houses in the by-streets, here and there,

betokening an ancient place, The town lies on both sides of the Ayr, which is here broad and stately, and bordered with dwellings that look from their windows directly down into the passing tide.

I crossed the river by a modern and handsome stone bridge, and recrossed it, at no great distance, by a venerable structure of four gray arches, which must have bestridden the stream ever since the early days of Scottish history. These are the "Two Briggs of Ayr," whose midnight conversation was overheard by Burns, while other auditors were aware only of the rush and rumble of the wintry stream among the arches. The ancient bridge is steep and narrow, and paved like a street, and defended by a parapet of red freestone, except at the two ends, where some mean old shops allow scanty room for the pathway to creep between. Nothing else impressed me hereabouts, unless I mention that, during the rain, the women and girls went about the streets of Ayr barefooted to save their shoes.

The next morning wore a lowering aspect as if it felt itself destined to be one of many consecutive days of storm. After a good Scotch breakfast, however, of fresh

herrings and eggs, we took a fly, and started at a little past ten for the banks of the Doon. On our way, at about two miles from Ayr, we drew up at a roadside cottage, on which was an inscription to the effect that Robert Burns was born within its walls. It is now a public house; and, of course, we alighted and entered its little sitting-room, which, as we at present see it, is a neat apartment with the modern improvement of a ceiling. The walls are much overscribbled with names of visitors, and the wooden door of a cupboard in the wainscot, as well as all the other wood-work of the room, is cut and carved with initial letters. So, likewise, are two tables, which, having received a coat of varnish over the inscriptions, form really curious and interesting articles of furniture. I have seldom (though I do not personally adopt this mode of illustrating my humble name) felt inclined to ridicule the natural impulse of most people thus to record themselves at the shrines of poets and heroes.

On a panel, let into the wall in a corner of the room, is a portrait of Burns, copied from the original picture by Nasmyth. The floor of this apartment is of boards, which are probably a recent substitute for the

ordinary flag-stones of a peasant's cottage. There is but one other room pertaining to the genuine birthplace of Robert Burns: it is the kitchen, into which we now went. It has a floor of flag-stones, even ruder than those of Shakespeare's house, — though, perhaps, not so strangely cracked and broken as the latter, over which the hoof of Satan himself might seem to have been trampling. A new window has been opened through the wall, towards the road; but on the opposite side is the little original window, of only four small panes, through which came the first daylight that shone upon the Scottish poet. At the side of the room, opposite the fireplace, is a recess, containing a bed, which can be hidden by curtains. In that humble nook, of all places in the world, Providence was pleased to deposit the germ of richest human life which mankind then had within its circumference.

These two rooms, as I have said, make up the whole sum and substance of Burns's birthplace: for there were no chambers, nor even attics; and the thatched roof formed the only ceiling of kitchen and sitting-room, the height of which was that of the whole house. The cottage, however, is attached to another edifice of the same size

Burns's Birthplace

and description, as these little habitations often are; and, moreover, a splendid addition has been made to it, since the poet's renown began to draw visitors to the wayside alehouse. The old woman of the house led us through an entry, and showed a vaulted hall, of no vast dimensions, to be sure, but marvelously large and splendid as compared with what might be anticipated from the outward aspect of the cottage. It contained a bust of Burns, and was hung round with pictures and engravings, principally illustrative of his life and poems. In this part of the house, too, there is a parlor, fragrant with tobacco-smoke; and, no doubt, many a noggin of whiskey is here quaffed to the memory of the bard, who professed to draw so much inspiration from that potent liquor.

We bought some engravings of Kirk Alloway, the Bridge of Doon, and the monument, and gave the old woman a fee besides, and took our leave. A very short drive farther brought us within sight of the monument, and to the hotel, situated close by the entrance of the ornamental grounds within which the former is inclosed. We rang the bell at the gate of the inclosure, but were forced to wait a considerable time;

because the old man, the regular superintendent of the spot, had gone to assist at the laying of the corner-stone of a new kirk. He appeared anon, and admitted us, but immediately hurried away to be present at the concluding ceremonies, leaving us locked up with Burns.

The inclosure around the monument is beautifully laid out as an ornamental garden, and abundantly provided with rare flowers and shrubbery, all tended with loving care. The monument stands on an elevated site, and consists of a massive basement story, three-sided, above which rises a light and elegant Grecian temple, — a mere dome, supported on Corinthian pillars, and open to all the winds. The edifice is beautiful in itself; though I know not what peculiar appropriateness it may have, as the memorial of a Scottish rural poet.

The door of the basement story stood open; and, entering, we saw a bust of Burns in a niche, looking keener, more refined, but not so warm and whole-souled as his pictures usually do. I think the likeness cannot be good. In the centre of the room stood a glass case, in which were reposited the two volumes of the little

Pocket Bible that Burns gave to Highland Mary, when they pledged their troth to one another. It is poorly printed on coarse paper. A verse of Scripture referring to the solemnity and awfulness of vows is written within the cover of each volume, in the poet's own hand; and fastened to one of the covers is a lock of Highland Mary's golden hair. This Bible had been carried to America by one of her relatives, but was sent back to be fitly treasured here.

There is a staircase within the monument, by which we ascended to the top, and had a view of both Briggs of Doon: the scene of Tam O'Shanter's misadventure being close at hand. Descending, we wandered through the inclosed garden, and came to a little building in a corner, on entering which, we found the two statues of Tam and Sutor Wat, — ponderous stonework enough, yet permeated in a remarkable degree with living warmth and jovial hilarity. From this part of the garden, too, we again beheld the old Brigg of Doon, over which Tam galloped in such imminent and awful peril. It is a beautiful object in the landscape, with one high, graceful arch, ivy-grown, and shadowed all over and around with foliage.

When we had waited a good while, the old gardener came, telling us that he had heard an excellent prayer at laying the corner-stone of the new kirk. He now gave us some roses and sweetbrier, and let us out from his pleasant garden. We immediately hastened to Kirk Alloway, which is within two or three minutes' walk of the monument. A few steps ascend from the roadside, through a gate, into the old graveyard, in the midst of which stands the kirk. The edifice is wholly roofless, but the side-walls and gable-ends are quite entire, though portions of them are evidently modern restorations. Never was there a plainer little church, or one with smaller architectural pretensions; no New England meeting-house has more simplicity in its very self, though poetry and fun have clambered and clustered so wildly over Kirk Alloway that it is difficult to see it as it actually exists. By the by, I do not understand why Satan and an assembly of witches should hold their revels within a consecrated precinct; but the weird scene has so established itself in the world's imaginative faith that it must be accepted as an authentic incident, in spite of rule and reason to the contrary. Pos-

The Auld Brig o' Doon

sibly, some carnal minister, some priest of pious aspect and hidden infidelity, had dispelled the consecration of the holy edifice by his pretense of prayer, and thus made it the resort of unhappy ghosts and sorcerers and devils.

The interior of the kirk, even now, is applied to quite as impertinent a purpose as when Satan and the witches used it as a dancing-hall; for it is divided in the midst by a wall of stone-masonry, and each compartment has been converted into a family burial-place. The name on one of the monuments is Crawfurd; the other bore no inscription. It is impossible not to feel that these good people, whoever they may be, had no business to thrust their prosaic bones into a spot that belongs to the world, and where their presence jars with the emotions, be they sad or gay, which the pilgrim brings thither. They shut us out from our own precincts, too, — from that inalienable possession which Burns bestowed in free gift upon mankind, by taking it from the actual earth and annexing it to the domain of imagination. And here these wretched squatters have lain down to their long sleep, after barring each of the two doorways of the kirk with

an iron grate! May their rest be troubled, till they rise and let us in!

Kirk Alloway is inconceivably small, considering how large a space it fills in our imagination before we see it. I paced its length, outside of the wall, and found it only seventeen of my paces, and not more than ten of them in breadth. There seem to have been but very few windows, all of which, if I rightly remember, are now blocked up with mason-work of stone. One mullioned window, tall and narrow, in the eastern gable, might have been seen by Tam O'Shanter, blazing with devilish light, as he approached along the road from Ayr; and there is a small and square one, on the side nearest the road, into which he might have peered, as he sat on horseback. Indeed, I could easily have looked through it, standing on the ground, had not the opening been walled up. There is an odd kind of belfry at the peak of one of the gables, with the small bell still hanging in it. And this is all that I remember of Kirk Alloway, except that the stones of its material are gray and irregular.

The road from Ayr passes Alloway Kirk, and crosses the Doon by a modern bridge,

Alloway Kirk

from that sacred spot. This done, we returned as speedily as might be to Ayr, whence, taking the rail, we soon beheld Ailsa Craig rising like a pyramid out of the sea. Drawing nearer to Glasgow, Ben Lomond hove in sight, with a dome-like summit, supported by a shoulder on each side. But a man is better than a mountain; and we had been holding intercourse, if not with the reality, at least with the stalwart ghost of one of Earth's memorable sons, amid the scenes where he lived and sung. We shall appreciate him better as a poet, hereafter; for there is no writer whose life, as a man, has so much to do with his fame, and throws such a necessary light upon whatever he has produced. Henceforth, there will be a personal warmth for us in everything that he wrote; and, like his countrymen, we shall know him in a kind of personal way, as if we had shaken hands with him, and felt the thrill of his actual voice.

IX.

A LONDON SUBURB

ONE of our English summers looks, in the retrospect, as if it had been patched with more frequent sunshine than the sky of England ordinarily affords; but I believe that it may be only a moral effect, — a "light that never was on sea or land," — caused by our having found a particularly delightful abode in the neighborhood of London. In order to enjoy it, however, I was compelled to solve the problem of living in two places at once, — an impossibility which I so far accomplished as to vanish, at frequent intervals, out of men's sight and knowledge on one side of England, and take my place in a circle of familiar faces on the other, so quietly that I seemed to have been there all along. It was the easier to get accustomed to our new residence, because it was not only rich in all the material properties of a home, but had also the home-like atmosphere, the household element, which is of too intan-

gible a character to be let even with the most thoroughly furnished lodging-house. A friend had given us his suburban residence, with all its conveniences, elegances, and snuggeries, — its drawing-rooms and library, still warm and bright with the recollection of the genial presences that we had known there, — its closets, chambers, kitchen, and even its wine-cellar, if we could have availed ourselves of so dear and delicate a trust, — its lawn and cosey garden-nooks, and whatever else makes up the multitudinous idea of an English home, — he had transferred it all to us, pilgrims and dusty wayfarers, that we might rest and take our ease during his summer's absence on the Continent. We had long been dwelling in tents, as it were, and morally shivering by hearths which, heap the bituminous coal upon them as we might, no blaze could render cheerful. I remember, to this day, the dreary feeling with which I sat by our first English fireside, and watched the chill and rainy twilight of an autumn day darkening down upon the garden; while the portrait of the preceding occupant of the house (evidently a most unamiable personage in his lifetime) scowled inhospitably from above the mantelpiece,

as if indignant that an American should try to make himself at home there. Possibly it may appease his sulky shade to know that I quitted his abode as much a stranger as I entered it. But now, at last, we were in a genuine British home, where refined and warm-hearted people had just been living their daily life, and had left us a summer's inheritance of slowly ripened days, such as a stranger's hasty opportunities so seldom permit him to enjoy.

Within so trifling a distance of the central spot of all the world (which, as Americans have at present no centre of their own, we may allow to be somewhere in the vicinity, we will say, of St. Paul's Cathedral), it might have seemed natural that I should be tossed about by the turbulence of the vast London whirlpool. But I had drifted into a still eddy, where conflicting movements made a repose, and, wearied with a good deal of uncongenial activity, I found the quiet of my temporary haven more attractive than anything that the great town could offer. I already knew London well; that is to say, I had long ago satisfied (so far as it was capable of satisfaction) that mysterious yearning — the magnetism of millions of hearts operating upon one —

which impels every man's individuality to mingle itself with the immensest mass of human life within his scope. Day after day, at an earlier period, I had trodden the thronged thoroughfares, the broad, lonely squares, the lanes, alleys, and strange labyrinthine courts, the parks, the gardens and inclosures of ancient studious societies, so retired and silent amid the city uproar, the markets, the foggy streets along the riverside, the bridges, — I had sought all parts of the metropolis, in short, with an unweariable and indiscriminating curiosity; until few of the native inhabitants, I fancy, had turned so many of its corners as myself. These aimless wanderings (in which my prime purpose and achievement were to lose my way, and so to find it the more surely) had brought me, at one time or another, to the sight and actual presence of almost all the objects and renowned localities that I had read about, and which had made London the dream-city of my youth. I had found it better than my dream; for there is nothing else in life comparable (in that species of enjoyment, I mean) to the thick, heavy, oppressive, sombre delight which an American is sensible of, hardly knowing whether to call it

a pleasure or a pain, in the atmosphere of London. The result was, that I acquired a home-feeling there, as nowhere else in the world, — though afterwards I came to have a somewhat similar sentiment in regard to Rome; and as long as either of those two great cities shall exist, the cities of the Past and of the Present, a man's native soil may crumble beneath his feet without leaving him altogether homeless upon earth.

Thus, having once fully yielded to its influence, I was in a manner free of the city, and could approach or keep away from it as I pleased. Hence it happened that, living within a quarter of an hour's rush of the London Bridge Terminus, I was oftener tempted to spend a whole summer day in our garden than to seek anything new or old, wonderful or commonplace, beyond its precincts. It was a delightful garden, of no great extent, but comprising a good many facilities for repose and enjoyment, such as arbors and garden-seats, shrubbery, flower-beds, rose-bushes in a profusion of bloom, pinks, poppies, geraniums, sweet-peas, and a variety of other scarlet, yellow, blue, and purple blossoms, which I did not trouble myself to recognize individually,

yet had always a vague sense of their beauty about me. The dim sky of England has a most happy effect on the coloring of flowers, blending richness with delicacy in the same texture; but in this garden, as everywhere else, the exuberance of English verdure had a greater charm than any tropical splendor or diversity of hue. The hunger for natural beauty might be satisfied with grass and green leaves forever. Conscious of the triumph of England in this respect, and loyally anxious for the credit of my own country, it gratified me to observe what trouble and pains the English gardeners are fain to throw away in producing a few sour plums and abortive pears and apples, — as, for example, in this very garden, where a row of unhappy trees were spread out perfectly flat against a brick wall, looking as if impaled alive, or crucified, with a cruel and unattainable purpose of compelling them to produce rich fruit by torture. For my part, I never ate an English fruit, raised in the open air, that could compare in flavor with a Yankee turnip.

The garden included that prime feature of English domestic scenery, a lawn. It had been leveled, carefully shorn, and con-

A Country House

verted into a bowling-green, on which we sometimes essayed to practice the time-honored game of bowls, most unskillfully, yet not without a perception that it involves a very pleasant mixture of exercise and ease, as is the case with most of the old English pastimes. Our little domain was shut in by the house on one side, and in other directions by a hedge-fence and a brick wall, which last was concealed or softened by shrubbery and the impaled fruit-trees already mentioned. Over all the outer region, beyond our immediate precincts, there was an abundance of foliage, tossed aloft from the near or distant trees with which that agreeable suburb is adorned. The effect was wonderfully sylvan and rural, insomuch that we might have fancied ourselves in the depths of a wooded seclusion; only that, at brief intervals, we could hear the galloping sweep of a railway-train passing within a quarter of a mile, and its discordant screech, moderated by a little farther distance, as it reached the Blackheath Station. That harsh, rough sound, seeking me out so inevitably, was the voice of the great world summoning me forth. I know not whether I was the more pained or pleased to be thus constantly put in

mind of the neighborhood of London; for, on the one hand, my conscience stung me a little for reading a book, or playing with children in the grass, when there were so many better things for an enlightened traveler to do, — while, at the same time, it gave a deeper delight to my luxurious idleness to contrast it with the turmoil which I escaped. On the whole, however, I do not repent of a single wasted hour, and only wish that I could have spent twice as many in the same way; for the impression on my memory is, that I was as happy in that hospitable garden as the English summer day was long.

One chief condition of my enjoyment was the weather. Italy has nothing like it, nor America. There never was such weather except in England, where, in requital of a vast amount of horrible east wind between February and June, and a brown October and black November, and a wet, chill, sunless winter, there are a few weeks of incomparable summer, scattered through July and August, and the earlier portion of September, small in quantity, but exquisite enough to atone for the whole year's atmospherical delinquencies. After all, the prevalent sombreness may have

brought out those sunny intervals in such high relief that I see them, in my recollection, brighter than they really were: a little light makes a glory for people who live habitually in a gray gloom. The English, however, do not seem to know how enjoyable the momentary gleams of their summer are; they call it broiling weather, and hurry to the seaside with red, perspiring faces, in a state of combustion and deliquescence; and I have observed that even their cattle have similar susceptibilities, seeking the deepest shade, or standing midleg deep in pools and streams to cool themselves, at temperatures which our own cows would deem little more than barely comfortable. To myself, after the summer heats of my native land had somewhat effervesced out of my blood and memory, it was the weather of Paradise itself. It might be a little too warm; but it was that modest and inestimable superabundance which constitutes a bounty of Providence, instead of just a niggardly enough. During my first year in England, residing in perhaps the most ungenial part of the kingdom, I could never be quite comfortable without a fire on the hearth; in the second twelvemonth, beginning to get ac-

climatized, I became sensible of an austere friendliness, shy, but sometimes almost tender, in the veiled, shadowy, seldom smiling summer; and in the succeeding years, — whether that I had renewed my fibre with English beef and replenished my blood with English ale, or whatever were the cause, — I grew content with winter and especially in love with summer, desiring little more for happiness than merely to breathe and bask. At the midsummer which we are now speaking of, I must needs confess that the noontide sun came down more fervently than I found altogether tolerable; so that I was fain to shift my position with the shadow of the shrubbery, making myself the movable index of a sundial that reckoned up the hours of an almost interminable day.

For each day seemed endless, though never wearisome. As far as your actual experience is concerned, the English summer day has positively no beginning and no end. When you awake, at any reasonable hour, the sun is already shining through the curtains; you live through unnumbered hours of Sabbath quietude, with a calm variety of incident softly etched upon their tranquil lapse; and at

length you become conscious that it is bedtime again, while there is still enough daylight in the sky to make the pages of your book distinctly legible. Night, if there be any such season, hangs down a transparent veil through which the bygone day beholds its successor; or, if not quite true of the latitude of London, it may be soberly affirmed of the more northern parts of the island, that To-morrow is born before its Yesterday is dead. They exist together in the golden twilight, where the decrepit old day dimly discerns the face of the ominous infant; and you, though a mere mortal, may simultaneously touch them both with one finger of recollection and another of prophecy. I cared not how long the day might be, nor how many of them. I had earned this repose by a long course of irksome toil and perturbation, and could have been content never to stray out of the limits of that suburban villa and its garden. If I lacked anything beyond, it would have satisfied me well enough to dream about it, instead of struggling for its actual possession. At least, this was the feeling of the moment; although the transitory, flitting, and irresponsible character of my life there, was perhaps the most en-

joyable element of all, as allowing me much of the comfort of house and home, without any sense of their weight upon my back. The nomadic life has great advantages, if we can find tents ready pitched for us at every stage.

So much for the interior of our abode, — a spot of deepest quiet, within reach of the intensest activity. But, even when we stepped beyond our own gate, we were not shocked with any immediate presence of the great world. We were dwelling in one of those oases that have grown up (in comparatively recent years, I believe) on the wide waste of Blackheath, which otherwise offers a vast extent of unoccupied ground in singular proximity to the metropolis. As a general thing, the proprietorship of the soil seems to exist in everybody and nobody; but exclusive rights have been obtained, here and there, chiefly by men whose daily concerns link them with London, so that you find their villas or boxes standing along village streets which have often more of an American aspect than the elder English settlements. The scene is semi-rural. Ornamental trees overshadow the sidewalks, and grassy margins border the wheel-tracks. The houses, to be sure,

have certain points of difference from those of an American village, bearing tokens of architectural design, though seldom of individual taste; and, as far as possible, they stand aloof from the street, and separated each from its neighbor by hedge or fence, in accordance with the careful exclusiveness of the English character, which impels the occupant, moreover, to cover the front of his dwelling with as much concealment of shrubbery as his limits will allow. Through the interstices, you catch glimpses of well-kept lawns, generally ornamented with flowers, and with what the English call rock-work, being heaps of ivy-grown stones and fossils, designed for romantic effect in a small way. Two or three of such village streets as are here described take a collective name, — as, for instance, Blackheath Park, — and constitute a kind of community of residents, with gateways, kept by a policeman, and a semi-privacy, stepping beyond which, you find yourself on the breezy heath.

On this great, bare, dreary common I often went astray, as I afterwards did on the Campagna of Rome, and drew the air (tainted with London smoke though it might be) into my lungs by deep inspira-

tions, with a strange and unexpected sense of desert freedom. The misty atmosphere helps you to fancy a remoteness that perhaps does not quite exist. During the little time that it lasts, the solitude is as impressive as that of a Western prairie or forest; but soon the railway shriek, a mile or two away, insists upon informing you of your whereabout; or you recognize in the distance some landmark that you may have known, — an insulated villa, perhaps, with its garden-wall around it, or the rudimental street of a new settlement which is sprouting on this otherwise barren soil. Half a century ago, the most frequent token of man's beneficent contiguity might have been a gibbet, and the creak, like a tavern sign, of a murderer swinging to and fro in irons. Blackheath, with its highwaymen and footpads, was dangerous in those days; and even now, for aught I know, the Western prairie may still compare favorably with it as a safe region to go astray in. When I was acquainted with Blackheath, the ingenious device of garroting had recently come into fashion; and I can remember, while crossing those waste places at midnight, and hearing footsteps behind me, to have been sensibly encouraged by also

hearing, not far off, the clinking hoof-tramp of one of the horse-patrols who do regular duty there. About sunset, or a little later, was the time when the broad and somewhat desolate peculiarity of the heath seemed to me to put on its utmost impressiveness. At that hour, finding myself on elevated ground, I once had a view of immense London, four or five miles off, with the vast Dome in the midst, and the towers of the two Houses of Parliament rising up into the smoky canopy, the thinner substance of which obscured a mass of things, and hovered about the objects that were most distinctly visible, — a glorious and sombre picture, dusky, awful, but irresistibly attractive, like a young man's dream of the great world, foretelling at that distance a grandeur never to be fully realized.

While I lived in that neighborhood, the tents of two or three sets of cricket-players were constantly pitched on Blackheath, and matches were going forward that seemed to involve the honor and credit of communities or counties, exciting an interest in everybody but myself, who cared not what part of England might glorify itself at the expense of another. It is necessary to be born an Englishman, I believe, in

order to enjoy this great national game; at any rate, as a spectacle for an outside observer, I found it lazy, lingering, tedious, and utterly devoid of pictorial effects. Choice of other amusements was at hand. Butts for archery were established, and bows and arrows were to be let, at so many shots for a penny, — there being abundance of space for a farther flight-shot than any modern archer can lend to his shaft. Then there was an absurd game of throwing a stick at crockery-ware, which I have witnessed a hundred times, and personally engaged in once or twice, without ever having the satisfaction to see a bit of broken crockery. In other spots you found donkeys for children to ride, and ponies of a very meek and patient spirit, on which the Cockney pleasure-seekers of both sexes rode races and made wonderful displays of horsemanship. By way of refreshment there was gingerbread (but, as a true patriot, I must pronounce it greatly inferior to our native dainty), and ginger-beer, and probably stancher liquor among the booth-keeper's hidden stores. The frequent railway-trains, as well as the numerous steamers to Greenwich, have made the vacant portions of Blackheath a play-

The Houses of Parliament

ground and breathing-place for the Londoners, readily and very cheaply accessible; so that, in view of this broader use and enjoyment, I a little grudged the tracts that have been filched away, so to speak, and individualized by thriving citizens. One sort of visitors especially interested me: they were schools of little boys or girls, under the guardianship of their instructors, — charity schools, as I often surmised from their aspect, collected among dark alleys and squalid courts; and hither they were brought to spend a summer afternoon, these pale little progeny of the sunless nooks of London, who had never known that the sky was any broader than that narrow and vapory strip above their native lane. I fancied that they took but a doubtful pleasure, being half affrighted at the wide, empty space overhead and round about them, finding the air too little medicated with smoke, soot, and graveyard exhalations, to be breathed with comfort, and feeling shelterless and lost because grimy London, their slatternly and disreputable mother, had suffered them to stray out of her arms.

Passing among these holiday people, we come to one of the gateways of Greenwich

Park, opening through an old brick wall. It admits us from the bare heath into a scene of antique cultivation and woodland ornament, traversed in all directions by avenues of trees, many of which bear tokens of a venerable age. These broad and well-kept pathways rise and decline over the elevations, and along the bases of gentle hills, which diversify the whole surface of the park. The loftiest and most abrupt of them (though but of very moderate height) is one of the earth's noted summits, and may hold up its head with Mont Blanc and Chimborazo, as being the site of Greenwich Observatory, where, if all nations will consent to say so, the longitude of our great globe begins. I used to regulate my watch by the broad dial-plate against the observatory wall, and felt it pleasant to be standing at the very centre of Time and Space.

There are lovelier parks than this in the neighborhood of London, richer scenes of greensward and cultivated trees; and Kensington, especially, in a summer afternoon, has seemed to me as delightful as any place can or ought to be, in a world which, some time or other, we must quit. But Greenwich, too, is beautiful, — a spot where

the art of man has conspired with Nature, as if he and the great mother had taken counsel together how to make a pleasant scene, and the longest liver of the two had faithfully carried out their mutual design. It has, likewise, an additional charm of its own, because, to all appearance, it is the people's property and play-ground in a much more genuine way than the aristocratic resorts in closer vicinity to the metropolis. It affords one of the instances in which the monarch's property is actually the people's, and shows how much more natural is their relation to the sovereign than to the nobility, which pretends to hold the intervening space between the two: for a nobleman makes a paradise only for himself, and fills it with his own pomp and pride; whereas the people are sooner or later the legitimate inheritors of whatever beauty kings and queens create, as now of Greenwich Park. On Sundays, when the sun shone, and even on those grim and sombre days when, if it do not actually rain, the English persist in calling it fine weather, it was too good to see how sturdily the plebeians trod under their own oaks, and what fullness of simple enjoyment they evidently found there. They

were the people, — not the populace, — specimens of a class whose Sunday clothes are a distinct kind of garb from their week-day ones: and this, in England, implies wholesome habits of life, daily thrift, and a rank above the lowest. I longed to be acquainted with them, in order to investigate what manner of folks they were, what sort of households they kept, their politics, their religion, their tastes, and whether they were as narrow-minded as their betters. There can be very little doubt of it; an Englishman is English, in whatever rank of life, though no more intensely so, I should imagine, as an artisan or petty shopkeeper, than as a member of Parliament.

The English character, as I conceive it, is by no means a very lofty one; they seem to have a great deal of earth and grimy dust clinging about them, as was probably the case with the stalwart and quarrelsome people who sprouted up out of the soil, after Cadmus had sown the dragon's teeth. And yet, though the individual Englishman is sometimes preternaturally disagreeable, an observer standing aloof has a sense of natural kindness towards them in the lump. They adhere

closer to the original simplicity in which mankind was created than we ourselves do; they love, quarrel, laugh, cry, and turn their actual selves inside out with greater freedom than any class of Americans would consider decorous. It was often so with these holiday folks in Greenwich Park; and, ridiculous as it may sound, I fancy myself to have caught very satisfactory glimpses of Arcadian life among the Cockneys there, hardly beyond the scope of Bow-Bells, picnicking in the grass, uncouthly gamboling on the broad slopes, or straying in motley groups or by single pairs of love-making youths and maidens, along the sun-streaked avenues. Even the omnipresent policemen or park-keepers could not disturb the beatific impression on my mind. One feature, at all events, of the Golden Age was to be seen in the herds of deer that encountered you in the somewhat remoter recesses of the park, and were readily prevailed upon to nibble a bit of bread out of your hand. But, though no wrong had ever been done them, and no horn had sounded nor hound bayed at the heels of themselves or their antlered progenitors for centuries past, there was still an apprehensiveness lingering in their

hearts; so that a slight movement of the hand or a step too near would send a whole squadron of them scampering away, just as a breath scatters the winged seeds of a dandelion.

The aspect of Greenwich Park, with all those festal people wandering through it, resembled that of the Borghese Gardens under the walls of Rome, on a Sunday or Saint's day; but, I am not ashamed to say, it a little disturbed whatever grimly ghost of Puritanic strictness might be lingering in the sombre depths of a New England heart, among severe and sunless remembrances of the Sabbaths of childhood, and pangs of remorse for ill-gotten lessons in the catechism, and for erratic fantasies or hardly suppressed laughter in the middle of long sermons. Occasionally, I tried to take the long-hoarded sting out of these compunctious smarts by attending divine service in the open air. On a cart outside of the park-wall (and, if I mistake not, at two or three corners and secluded spots within the park itself) a Methodist preacher uplifts his voice and speedily gathers a congregation, his zeal for whose religious welfare impels the good man to such earnest vociferation and toilsome gesture that his

perspiring face is quickly in a stew. His inward flame conspires with the too fervid sun, and makes a positive martyr of him, even in the very exercise of his pious labor; insomuch that he purchases every atom of spiritual increment to his hearers by loss of his own corporeal solidity, and, should his discourse last long enough, must finally exhale before their eyes. If I smile at him, be it understood, it is not in scorn; he performs his sacred office more acceptably than many a prelate. These wayside services attract numbers who would not otherwise listen to prayer, sermon, or hymn, from one year's end to another, and who, for that very reason, are the auditors most likely to be moved by the preacher's eloquence. Yonder Greenwich pensioner, too, — in his costume of three-cornered hat, and old-fashioned, brass-buttoned blue coat with ample skirts, which makes him look like a contemporary of Admiral Benbow, — that tough old mariner may hear a word or two which will go nearer his heart than anything that the chaplain of the Hospital can be expected to deliver. I always noticed, moreover, that a considerable proportion of the audience were soldiers, who came hither with a day's leave

from Woolwich, — hardy veterans in aspect, some of whom wore as many as four or five medals, Crimean or East Indian, on the breasts of their scarlet coats. The miscellaneous congregation listen with every appearance of heartfelt interest; and, for my own part, I must frankly acknowledge that I never found it possible to give five minutes' attention to any other English preaching: so cold and commonplace are the homilies that pass for such, under the aged roofs of churches. And as for cathedrals, the sermon is an exceedingly diminutive and unimportant part of the religious services, — if, indeed, it be considered a part, — among the pompous ceremonies, the intonations, and the resounding and lofty-voiced strains of the choristers. The magnificence of the setting quite dazzles out what we Puritans look upon as the jewel of the whole affair; for I presume that it was our forefathers, the Dissenters in England and America, who gave the sermon its present prominence in the Sabbath exercises.[1]

[1] We all, together with Mr. Squarey, went to Chester last Sunday, and attended the cathedral service. . . . In America the sermon is the principal thing; but here all this magnificent ceremonial of prayer and chanted

The Methodists are probably the first and only Englishmen who have worshiped in the open air since the ancient Britons listened to the preaching of the Druids; and it reminded me of that old priesthood, to see certain memorials of their dusky epoch — not religious, however, but warlike — in the neighborhood of the spot where the Methodist was holding forth. These were some ancient barrows, beneath or within which are supposed to lie buried the slain of a forgotten or doubtfully remembered battle, fought on the site of Greenwich Park as long ago as two or three centuries after the birth of Christ. Whatever may once have been their height and magnitude, they have now scarcely more prominence in the actual scene than the battle of which they are the sole monuments retains in history, — being only a few mounds side by side, elevated a little above the surface of the ground, ten or twelve feet in diameter, with a shallow depression in their summits. When one of them was opened, not long since, no bones,

responses and psalms and anthems was the setting to a short, meagre discourse, which would not have been considered of any account among the elaborate intellectual efforts of New England ministers. — I. 466.

nor armor, nor weapons were discovered, nothing but some small jewels, and a tuft of hair, — perhaps from the head of a valiant general, who, dying on the field of his victory, bequeathed this lock, together with his indestructible fame, to after ages. The hair and jewels are probably in the British Museum, where the potsherds and rubbish of innumerable generations make the visitor wish that each passing century could carry off all its fragments and relics along with it, instead of adding them to the continually accumulating burden which human knowledge is compelled to lug upon its back.[1] As for the fame, I know not what has become of it.

[1] The fact is, the world is accumulating too many materials for knowledge. We do not recognize for rubbish what is really rubbish; and under this head might be reckoned very many things one sees in the British Museum: and, as each generation leaves its fragments and potsherds behind it, such will finally be the desperate conclusion of the learned. — II. 143.

Yesterday I went out at about twelve, and visited the British Museum; an exceedingly tiresome affair. It quite crushes a person to see so much at once, and I wandered from hall to hall with a weary and heavy heart, wishing (Heaven forgive me!) that the Elgin Marbles and the frieze of the Parthenon were all burnt into lime, and that the granite Egyptian statues were hewn and squared into building-stones, and that the mummies had all turned to dust two thousand years

After traversing the park, we come into the neighborhood of Greenwich Hospital, and will pass through one of its spacious gateways for the sake of glancing at an establishment which does more honor to the heart of England than anything else that I am acquainted with, of a public nature. It is very seldom that we can be sensible of anything like kindliness in the acts or relations of such an artificial thing as a National Government. Our own government, I should conceive, is too much an abstraction ever to feel any sympathy for its maimed sailors and soldiers, though it will doubtless do them a severe kind of justice, as chilling as the touch of steel. But it seemed to me that the Greenwich pensioners are the petted children of the nation, and that the government is their dry-nurse, and that the old men themselves have a child-like consciousness of their

ago; and, in fine, that all the material relics of so many successive ages had disappeared with the generations that produced them. The present is burdened too much with the past. We have not time, in our earthly existence, to appreciate what is warm with life, and immediately around us; yet we heap up these old shells, out of which human life has long emerged, casting them off forever. I do not see how future ages are to stagger onward under all this dead weight, with the additions that will be continually made to it. — II. 207.

position. Very likely, a better sort of life might have been arranged, and a wiser care bestowed on them; but, such as it is, it enables them to spend a sluggish, careless, comfortable old age, grumbling, growling, gruff, as if all the foul weather of their past years were pent up within them, yet not much more discontented than such weather-beaten and battle-battered fragments of human kind must inevitably be. Their home, in its outward form, is on a very magnificent plan. Its germ was a royal palace, the full expansion of which has resulted in a series of edifices externally more beautiful than any English palace that I have seen, consisting of several quadrangles of stately architecture, united by colonnades and gravel-walks, and inclosing grassy squares, with statues in the centre, the whole extending along the Thames. It is built of marble, or very light-colored stone, in the classic style, with pillars and porticos, which (to my own taste, and, I fancy, to that of the old sailors) produce but a cold and shivery effect in the English climate. Had I been the architect, I would have studied the characters, habits, and predilections of nautical people in Wapping, Rotherhithe, and the

neighborhood of the Tower (places which I visited in affectionate remembrance of Captain Lemuel Gulliver, and other actual or mythological navigators), and would have built the hospital in a kind of ethereal similitude to the narrow, dark, ugly, and inconvenient, but snug and cosey homeliness of the sailor boarding-houses there. There can be no question that all the above attributes, or enough of them to satisfy an old sailor's heart, might be reconciled with architectural beauty and the wholesome contrivances of modern dwellings, and thus a novel and genuine style of building be given to the world.

But their countrymen meant kindly by the old fellows in assigning them the ancient royal site where Elizabeth held her court and Charles II. began to build his palace. So far as the locality went, it was treating them like so many kings; and, with a discreet abundance of grog, beer, and tobacco, there was perhaps little more to be accomplished in behalf of men whose whole previous lives have tended to unfit them for old age. Their chief discomfort is probably for lack of something to do or think about. But, judging by the few whom I saw, a listless habit seems to have

crept over them, a dim dreaminess of mood, in which they sit between asleep and awake, and find the long day wearing towards bedtime without its having made any distinct record of itself upon their consciousness. Sitting on stone benches in the sunshine, they subside into slumber, or nearly so, and start at the approach of footsteps echoing under the colonnades, ashamed to be caught napping, and rousing themselves in a hurry, as formerly on the midnight watch at sea. In their brightest moments, they gather in groups and bore one another with endless sea-yarns about their voyages under famous admirals, and about gale and calm, battle and chase, and all that class of incident that has its sphere on the deck and in the hollow interior of a ship, where their world has exclusively been. For other pastime, they quarrel among themselves, comrade with comrade, and perhaps shake paralytic fists in furrowed faces. If inclined for a little exercise, they can bestir their wooden legs on the long esplanade that borders by the Thames, criticising the rig of passing ships, and firing off volleys of malediction at the steamers, which have made the sea another element than that they used to be ac-

quainted with. All this is but cold comfort for the evening of life, yet may compare rather favorably with the preceding portions of it, comprising little save imprisonment on shipboard, in the course of which they have been tossed all about the world and caught hardly a glimpse of it, forgetting what grass and trees are, and never finding out what woman is, though they may have encountered a painted spectre which they took for her. A country owes much to human beings whose bodies she has worn out and whose immortal part she has left undeveloped or debased, as we find them here; and having wasted an idle paragraph upon them, let me now suggest that old men have a kind of susceptibility to moral impressions, and even (up to an advanced period) a receptivity of truth, which often appears to come to them after the active time of life is past. The Greenwich pensioners might prove better subjects for true education now than in their schoolboy days; but then where is the Normal School that could educate instructors for such a class?

There is a beautiful chapel for the pensioners, in the classic style, over the altar of which hangs a picture by West. I

never could look at it long enough to make out its design; for this artist (though it pains me to say it of so respectable a countryman) had a gift of frigidity, a knack of grinding ice into his paint, a power of stupefying the spectator's perceptions and quelling his sympathy, beyond any other limner that ever handled a brush. In spite of many pangs of conscience, I seize this opportunity to wreak a lifelong abhorrence upon the poor, blameless man, for the sake of that dreary picture of Lear, an explosion of frosty fury, that used to be a bugbear to me in the Athenæum Exhibition. Would fire burn it, I wonder?

The principal thing that they have to show you, at Greenwich Hospital, is the Painted Hall. It is a splendid and spacious room, at least a hundred feet long and half as high, with a ceiling painted in fresco by Sir James Thornhill. As a work of art, I presume, this frescoed canopy has little merit, though it produces an exceedingly rich effect by its brilliant coloring and as a specimen of magnificent upholstery. The walls of the grand apartment are entirely covered with pictures, many of them representing battles and other naval incidents that were once fresher in the world's mem-

ory than now, but chiefly portraits of old admirals, comprising the whole line of heroes who have trod the quarter-decks of British ships for more than two hundred years back. Next to a tomb in Westminster Abbey, which was Nelson's most elevated object of ambition, it would seem to be the highest meed of a naval warrior to have his portrait hung up in the Painted Hall; but, by dint of victory upon victory, these illustrious personages have grown to be a mob, and by no means a very interesting one, so far as regards the character of the faces here depicted. They are generally commonplace, and often singularly stolid; and I have observed (both in the Painted Hall and elsewhere, and not only in portraits, but in the actual presence of such renowned people as I have caught glimpses of) that the countenances of heroes are not nearly so impressive as those of statesmen, — except, of course, in the rare instances where warlike ability has been but the one-sided manifestation of a profound genius for managing the world's affairs.

Nine tenths of these distinguished admirals, for instance, if their faces tell truth, must needs have been blockheads,

and might have served better, one would imagine, as wooden figure-heads for their own ships than to direct any difficult and intricate scheme of action from the quarter-deck. It is doubtful whether the same kind of men will hereafter meet with a similar degree of success; for they were victorious chiefly through the old English hardihood, exercised in a field of which modern science had not yet got possession. Rough valor has lost something of its value since their days, and must continue to sink lower and lower in the comparative estimate of warlike qualities. In the next naval war, as between England and France, I would bet, methinks, upon the Frenchman's head.

It is remarkable, however, that the great naval hero of England — the greatest, therefore, in the world, and of all time — had none of the stolid characteristics that belong to his class, and cannot fairly be accepted as their representative man. Foremost in the roughest of professions, he was as delicately organized as a woman, and as painfully sensitive as a poet. More than any other Englishman he won the love and admiration of his country, but won them through the efficacy of qualities that

are not English, or, at all events, were intensified in his case and made poignant and powerful by something morbid in the man, which put him otherwise at cross-purposes with life. He was a man of genius; and genius in an Englishman (not to cite the good old simile of a pearl in the oyster) is usually a symptom of a lack of balance in the general making-up of the character; as we may satisfy ourselves by running over the list of their poets, for example, and observing how many of them have been sickly or deformed, and how often their lives have been darkened by insanity. An ordinary Englishman is the healthiest and wholesomest of human beings; an extraordinary one is almost always, in one way or another, a sick man. It was so with Lord Nelson. The wonderful contrast or relation between his personal qualities, the position which he held, and the life that he lived, makes him as interesting a personage as all history has to show; and it is a pity that Southey's biography — so good in its superficial way, and yet so inadequate as regards any real delineation of the man — should have taken the subject out of the hands of some writer endowed with more delicate appreciation

and deeper insight than that genuine Englishman possessed. But Southey accomplished his own purpose, which, apparently, was to present his hero as a pattern for England's young midshipmen.

But the English capacity for hero-worship is full to the brim with what they are able to comprehend of Lord Nelson's character. Adjoining the Painted Hall is a smaller room, the walls of which are completely and exclusively adorned with pictures of the great Admiral's exploits. We see the frail, ardent man in all the most noted events of his career, from his encounter with a Polar Bear to his death at Trafalgar, quivering here and there about the room like a blue, lambent flame. No Briton ever enters that apartment without feeling the beef and ale of his composition stirred to its depths, and finding himself changed into a hero for the nonce, however stolid his brain, however tough his heart, however unexcitable his ordinary mood. To confess the truth, I myself, though belonging to another parish, have been deeply sensible to the sublime recollections there aroused, acknowledging that Nelson expressed his life in a kind of symbolic poetry which I had as much right to understand

as these burly islanders.[1] Cool and critical observer as I sought to be, I enjoyed their burst of honest indignation when a visitor (not an American, I am glad to say) thrust his walking-stick almost into Nelson's face, in one of the pictures, by way of pointing a remark; and the bystanders immediately glowed like so many hot coals, and would probably have consumed the offender in their wrath, had he not effected his retreat. But the most sacred objects of all are two of Nelson's coats, under separate glass cases. One is that which he wore at the Battle of the Nile, and it is now sadly injured by moths, which will quite destroy it in a few years, unless its guardians preserve it as we do Washington's military suit by occasionally baking it in an oven. The other is the coat in which he received his death-wound at Trafalgar. On its breast are sewed three or four stars and orders of knighthood, now much dimmed by time and damp, but which glittered brightly enough on the battle-day to draw the fatal

[1] Even the great sailor, Nelson, was unlike his countrymen in the qualities that constituted him a hero; he was not the perfection of an Englishman, but a creature of another kind, — sensitive, nervous, excitable, and really more like a Frenchman. — II. 531.

aim of a French marksman. The bullet-hole is visible on the shoulder, as well as a part of the golden tassels of an epaulet, the rest of which was shot away. Over the coat is laid a white waistcoat, with a great blood-stain on it, out of which all the redness has utterly faded, leaving it of a dingy yellow hue, in the threescore years since that blood gushed out. Yet it was once the reddest blood in England, — Nelson's blood!

The hospital stands close adjacent to the town of Greenwich, which will always retain a kind of festal aspect in my memory, in consequence of my having first become acquainted with it on Easter Monday. Till a few years ago, the first three days of Easter were a carnival season in this old town, during which the idle and disreputable part of London poured itself into the streets like an inundation of the Thames, — as unclean as that turbid mixture of the offscourings of the vast city, and overflowing with its grimy pollution whatever rural innocence, if any, might be found in the suburban neighborhood. This festivity was called Greenwich Fair, the final one of which, in an immemorial succession, it was my fortune to behold.

If I had bethought myself of going through the fair with a note-book and pencil, jotting down all the prominent objects, I doubt not that the result might have been a sketch of English life quite as characteristic and worthy of historical preservation as an account of the Roman Carnival. Having neglected to do so, I remember little more than a confusion of unwashed and shabbily dressed people, intermixed with some smarter figures, but, on the whole, presenting a mobbish appearance such as we never see in our own country. It taught me to understand why Shakespeare, in speaking of a crowd, so often alludes to its attribute of evil odor. The common people of England, I am afraid, have no daily familiarity with even so necessary a thing as a wash-bowl, not to mention a bathing-tub. And, furthermore, it is one mighty difference between them and us, that every man and woman on our side of the water has a working-day suit and a holiday suit, and is occasionally as fresh as a rose, whereas, in the good old country, the griminess of his labor or squalid habits clings forever to the individual, and gets to be a part of his personal substance. These are broad facts, involving

great corollaries and dependencies. There are really, if you stop to think about it, few sadder spectacles in the world than a ragged coat, or a soiled and shabby gown, at a festival.

This unfragrant crowd was exceedingly dense, being welded together, as it were, in the street through which we strove to make our way. On either side were oyster-stands, stalls of oranges (a very prevalent fruit in England, where they give the withered ones a guise of freshness by boiling them), and booths covered with old sail-cloth, in which the commodity that most attracted the eye was gilt gingerbread. It was so completely enveloped in Dutch gilding that I did not at first recognize an old acquaintance, but wondered what those golden crowns and images could be. There were likewise drums and other toys for small children, and a variety of showy and worthless articles for children of a larger growth; though it perplexed me to imagine who, in such a mob, could have the innocent taste to desire playthings, or the money to pay for them. Not that I have a right to accuse the mob, on my own knowledge, of being any less innocent than a set of cleaner and better dressed people

might have been; for, though one of them stole my pocket-handkerchief, I could not but consider it fair game, under the circumstances, and was grateful to the thief for sparing me my purse. They were quiet, civil, and remarkably good-humored, making due allowance for the national gruffness; there was no riot, no tumultuous swaying to and fro of the mass, such as I have often noted in an American crowd; no noise of voices, except frequent bursts of laughter, hoarse or shrill, and a widely diffused, inarticulate murmur, resembling nothing so much as the rumbling of the tide among the arches of London Bridge. What immensely perplexed me was a sharp, angry sort of rattle, in all quarters, far off and close at hand, and sometimes right at my own back, where it sounded as if the stout fabric of my English surtout had been ruthlessly rent in twain; and everybody's clothes, all over the fair, were evidently being torn asunder in the same way. By and by, I discovered that this strange noise was produced by a little instrument called "The Fun of the Fair," — a sort of rattle, consisting of a wooden wheel, the cogs of which turn against a thin slip of wood, and so produce a rasping sound when

drawn smartly against a person's back. The ladies draw their rattles against the backs of their male friends (and everybody passes for a friend at Greenwich Fair), and the young men return the compliment on the broad British backs of the ladies; and all are bound by immemorial custom to take it in good part and be merry at the joke. As it was one of my prescribed official duties to give an account of such mechanical contrivances as might be unknown in my own country, I have thought it right to be thus particular in describing the Fun of the Fair.

But this was far from being the sole amusement. There were theatrical booths, in front of which were pictorial representations of the scenes to be enacted within; and anon a drummer emerged from one of them, thumping on a terribly lax drum, and followed by the entire *dramatis personæ*, who ranged themselves on a wooden platform in front of the theatre. They were dressed in character, but wofully shabby, with very dingy and wrinkled white tights, threadbare cotton-velvets, crumpled silks, and crushed muslin, and all the gloss and glory gone out of their aspect and attire, seen thus in the broad

daylight and after a long series of performances. They sang a song together, and withdrew into the theatre, whither the public were invited to follow them at the inconsiderable cost of a penny a ticket. Before another booth stood a pair of brawny fighting-men, displaying their muscle, and soliciting patronage for an exhibition of the noble British art of pugilism. There were pictures of giants, monsters, and outlandish beasts, most prodigious, to be sure, and worthy of all admiration, unless the artist had gone incomparably beyond his subject. Jugglers proclaimed aloud the miracles which they were prepared to work; and posture-makers dislocated every joint of their bodies and tied their limbs into inextricable knots, wherever they could find space to spread a little square of carpet on the ground. In the midst of the confusion, while everybody was treading on his neighbor's toes, some little boys were very solicitous to brush your boots. These lads, I believe, are a product of modern society, — at least, no older than the time of Gay, who celebrates their origin in his "Trivia;" but in most other respects the scene reminded me of Bunyan's description of Vanity Fair, — nor is

it at all improbable that the Pilgrim may have been a merry-maker here in his wild youth.

It seemed very singular — though, of course, I immediately classified it as an English characteristic — to see a great many portable weighing-machines, the owners of which cried out continually and amain, "Come, know your weight! Come, come, know your weight to-day! Come, know your weight!" and a multitude of people, mostly large in the girth, were moved by this vociferation to sit down in the machines. I know not whether they valued themselves on their beef, and estimated their standing as members of society at so much a pound; but I shall set it down as a national peculiarity, and a symbol of the prevalence of the earthly over the spiritual element, that Englishmen are wonderfully bent on knowing how solid and physically ponderous they are.

On the whole, having an appetite for the brown bread and the tripe and sausages of life, as well as for its nicer cates and dainties, I enjoyed the scene, and was amused at the sight of a gruff old Greenwich pensioner, who, forgetful of the sailor-frolics of his young days, stood looking

with grim disapproval at all these vanities. Thus we squeezed our way through the mob-jammed town, and emerged into the Park, where, likewise, we met a great many merry-makers, but with freer space for their gambols than in the streets. We soon found ourselves the targets for a cannonade with oranges (most of them in a decayed condition), which went humming past our ears from the vantage-ground of neighboring hillocks, sometimes hitting our sacred persons with an inelastic thump. This was one of the privileged freedoms of the time, and was nowise to be resented, except by returning the salute. Many persons were running races, hand in hand, down the declivities, especially that steepest one on the summit of which stands the world-central Observatory, and (as in the race of life) the partners were usually male and female, and often caught a tumble together before reaching the bottom of the hill. Hereabouts we were pestered and haunted by two young girls, the elder not more than thirteen, teasing us to buy matches; and finding no market for their commodity, the taller one suddenly turned a somerset before our faces, and rolled heels over head from top to bottom of the

hill on which we stood. Then, scrambling up the acclivity, the topsy-turvy trollop offered us her matches again, as demurely as if she had never flung aside her equilibrium; so that, dreading a repetition of the feat, we gave her sixpence and an admonition, and enjoined her never to do so any more.

The most curious amusement that we witnessed here — or anywhere else, indeed — was an ancient and hereditary pastime called "Kissing in the Ring." I shall describe the sport exactly as I saw it, although an English friend assures me that there are certain ceremonies with a handkerchief, which make it much more decorous and graceful. A handkerchief, indeed! There was no such thing in the crowd, except it were the one which they had just filched out of my pocket. It is one of the simplest kinds of games, needing little or no practice to make the player altogether perfect; and the manner of it is this: A ring is formed (in the present case, it was of large circumference and thickly gemmed around with faces, mostly on the broad grin), into the centre of which steps an adventurous youth, and, looking round the circle, selects whatever maiden may most

delight his eye. He presents his hand (which she is bound to accept), leads her into the centre, salutes her on the lips, and retires, taking his stand in the expectant circle. The girl, in her turn, throws a favorable regard on some fortunate young man, offers her hand to lead him forth, makes him happy with a maidenly kiss, and withdraws to hide her blushes, if any there be, among the simpering faces in the ring; while the favored swain loses no time in transferring her salute to the prettiest and plumpest among the many mouths that are primming themselves in anticipation. And thus the thing goes on, till all the festive throng are inwreathed and intertwined into an endless and inextricable chain of kisses; though, indeed, it smote me with compassion to reflect that some forlorn pair of lips might be left out, and never know the triumph of a salute, after throwing aside so many delicate reserves for the sake of winning it. If the young men had any chivalry, there was a fair chance to display it by kissing the homeliest damsel in the circle.

To be frank, however, at the first glance, and to my American eye, they looked all homely alike, and the chivalry that I sug-

gest is more than I could have been capable of, at any period of my life. They seemed to be country-lasses, of sturdy and wholesome aspect, with coarse-grained, cabbage-rosy cheeks, and, I am willing to suppose, a stout texture of moral principle, such as would bear a good deal of rough usage without suffering much detriment. But how unlike the trim little damsels of my native land! I desire above all things to be courteous; but, since the plain truth must be told, the soil and climate of England produce feminine beauty as rarely as they do delicate fruit; and though admirable specimens of both are to be met with, they are the hot-house ameliorations of refined society, and apt, moreover, to relapse into the coarseness of the original stock. The men are manlike, but the women are not beautiful, though the female Bull be well enough adapted to the male. To return to the lasses of Greenwich Fair, their charms were few, and their behavior, perhaps, not altogether commendable; and yet it was impossible not to feel a degree of faith in their innocent intentions, with such a half-bashful zest and entire simplicity did they keep up their part of the game. It put the spectator in good-humor

to look at them, because there was still something of the old Arcadian life, the secure freedom of the antique age, in their way of surrendering their lips to strangers, as if there were no evil or impurity in the world. As for the young men, they were chiefly specimens of the vulgar sediment of London life, often shabbily genteel, rowdyish, pale, wearing the unbrushed coat, unshifted linen, and unwashed faces of yesterday, as well as the haggardness of last night's jollity in a gin-shop. Gathering their character from these tokens, I wondered whether there were any reasonable prospect of their fair partners returning to their rustic homes with as much innocence (whatever were its amount or quality) as they brought to Greenwich Fair, in spite of the perilous familiarity established by Kissing in the Ring.

The manifold disorders resulting from the fair, at which a vast city was brought into intimate relations with a comparatively rural district, have at length led to its suppression; this was the very last celebration of it, and brought to a close the broad-mouthed merriment of many hundred years. Thus my poor sketch, faint as its colors are, may acquire some little value in the

reader's eyes from the consideration that no observer of the coming time will ever have an opportunity to give a better. I should find it difficult to believe, however, that the queer pastime just described, or any moral mischief to which that and other customs might pave the way, can have led to the overthrow of Greenwich Fair; for it has often seemed to me that Englishmen of station and respectability, unless of a peculiarly philanthropic turn, have neither any faith in the feminine purity of the lower orders of their countrywomen, nor the slightest value for it, allowing its possible existence. The distinction of ranks is so marked, that the English cottage damsel holds a position somewhat analogous to that of the negro girl in our Southern States. Hence comes inevitable detriment to the moral condition of those men themselves, who forget that the humblest woman has a right and a duty to hold herself in the same sanctity as the highest. The subject cannot well be discussed in these pages; but I offer it as a serious conviction, from what I have been able to observe, that the England of to-day is the unscrupulous old England of Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, Humphrey Clinker and Roder-

ick Random; and in our refined era, just the same as at that more free-spoken epoch, this singular people has a certain contempt for any fine-strained purity, any special squeamishness, as they consider it, on the part of an ingenuous youth. They appear to look upon it as a suspicious phenomenon in the masculine character.

Nevertheless, I by no means take upon me to affirm that English morality, as regards the phase here alluded to, is really at a lower point than our own. Assuredly, I hope so, because, making a higher pretension, or, at all events, more carefully hiding whatever may be amiss, we are either better than they, or necessarily a great deal worse. It impressed me that their open avowal and recognition of immoralities served to throw the disease to the surface, where it might be more effectually dealt with, and leave a sacred interior not utterly profaned, instead of turning its poison back among the inner vitalities of the character, at the imminent risk of corrupting them all. Be that as it may, these Englishmen are certainly a franker and simpler people than ourselves, from peer to peasant; but if we can take it as compensatory on our part (which I leave to be considered) that they

owe those noble and manly qualities to a coarser grain in their nature, and that, with a finer one in ours, we shall ultimately acquire a marble polish of which they are unsusceptible, I believe that this may be the truth.

X.

UP THE THAMES

THE upper portion of Greenwich (where my last article left me loitering) is a cheerful, comely, old-fashioned town, the peculiarities of which, if there be any, have passed out of my remembrance. As you descend towards the Thames the streets get meaner, and the shabby and sunken houses, elbowing one another for frontage, bear the signboards of beer-shops and eating-rooms, with especial promises of white-bait and other delicacies in the fishing line. You observe, also, a frequent announcement of "Tea Gardens" in the rear; although, estimating the capacity of the premises by their external compass, the entire sylvan charm and shadowy seclusion of such blissful resorts must be limited within a small back-yard. These places of cheap sustenance and recreation depend for support upon the innumerable pleasure-parties who come from London Bridge by steamer, at a fare of a few pence, and who get as en-

joyable a meal for a shilling a head as the Ship Hotel would afford a gentleman for a guinea.

The steamers, which are constantly smoking their pipes up and down the Thames, offer much the most agreeable mode of getting to London. At least, it might be exceedingly agreeable, except for the myriad floating particles of soot from the stove-pipe, and the heavy heat of mid-summer sunshine on the unsheltered deck, or the chill, misty air-draught of a cloudy day, and the spiteful little showers of rain that may spatter down upon you at any moment, whatever the promise of the sky; besides which there is some slight inconvenience from the inexhaustible throng of passengers, who scarcely allow you standing-room, nor so much as a breath of unappropriated air, and never a chance to sit down. If these difficulties, added to the possibility of getting your pocket picked, weigh little with you, the panorama along the shores of the memorable river, and the incidents and shows of passing life upon its bosom, render the trip far preferable to the brief yet tiresome shoot along the railway track. On one such voyage, a regatta of wherries raced past us, and at once involved

London Bridge

every soul on board our steamer in the tremendous excitement of the struggle. The spectacle was but a moment within our view, and presented nothing more than a few light skiffs, in each of which sat a single rower, bare-armed, and with little apparel, save a shirt and drawers, pale, anxious, with every muscle on the stretch, and plying his oars in such fashion that the boat skimmed along with the aerial celerity of a swallow. I wondered at myself for so immediately catching an interest in the affair, which seemed to contain no very exalted rivalship of manhood; but, whatever the kind of battle or the prize of victory, it stirs one's sympathy immensely, and is even awful, to behold the rare sight of a man thoroughly in earnest, doing his best, putting forth all there is in him, and staking his very soul (as these rowers appeared willing to do) on the issue of the contest. It was the seventy-fourth annual regatta of the Free Watermen of Greenwich, and announced itself as under the patronage of the Lord Mayor and other distinguished individuals, at whose expense, I suppose, a prize-boat was offered to the conqueror, and some small amounts of money to the inferior competitors.

The aspect of London along the Thames, below Bridge, as it is called, is by no means so impressive as it ought to be, considering what peculiar advantages are offered for the display of grand and stately architecture by the passage of a river through the midst of a great city. It seems, indeed, as if the heart of London had been cleft open for the mere purpose of showing how rotten and drearily mean it had become. The shore is lined with the shabbiest, blackest, and ugliest buildings that can be imagined, decayed warehouses with blind windows, and wharves that look ruinous; insomuch that, had I known nothing more of the world's metropolis, I might have fancied that it had already experienced the downfall which I have heard commercial and financial prophets predict for it, within the century. And the muddy tide of the Thames, reflecting nothing, and hiding a million of unclean secrets within its breast, — a sort of guilty conscience, as it were, unwholesome with the rivulets of sin that constantly flow into it, — is just the dismal stream to glide by such a city. The surface, to be sure, displays no lack of activity, being fretted by the passage of a hundred steamers and covered with a good

deal of shipping, but mostly of a clumsier build than I had been accustomed to see in the Mersey : a fact which I complacently attributed to the smaller number of American clippers in the Thames, and the less prevalent influence of American example in refining away the broad-bottomed capacity of the old Dutch or English models.

About midway between Greenwich and London Bridge, at a rude landing-place on the left bank of the river, the steamer rings its bell and makes a momentary pause in front of a large circular structure, where it may be worth our while to scramble ashore. It indicates the locality of one of those prodigious practical blunders that would supply John Bull with a topic of inexhaustible ridicule if his cousin Jonathan had committed them, but of which he himself perpetrates ten to our one in the mere wantonness of wealth that lacks better employment. The circular building covers the entrance to the Thames Tunnel, and is surmounted by a dome of glass, so as to throw daylight down into the great depth at which the passage of the river commences. Descending a wearisome succession of staircases, we at last find ourselves, still in the broad noon, standing before a

closed door, on opening which we behold the vista of an arched corridor that extends into everlasting midnight. In these days, when glass has been applied to so many new purposes, it is a pity that the architect had not thought of arching portions of his abortive tunnel with immense blocks of the lucid substance, over which the dusky Thames would have flowed like a cloud, making the sub-fluvial avenue only a little gloomier than a street of upper London. At present, it is illuminated at regular intervals by jets of gas, not very brilliantly, yet with lustre enough to show the damp plaster of the ceiling and walls, and the massive stone pavement, the crevices of which are oozy with moisture, not from the incumbent river, but from hidden springs in the earth's deeper heart. There are two parallel corridors, with a wall between, for the separate accommodation of the double throng of foot-passengers, equestrians, and vehicles of all kinds, which was expected to roll and reverberate continually through the tunnel. Only one of them has ever been opened, and its echoes are but feebly awakened by infrequent footfalls.

Yet there seem to be people who spend

their lives here, and who probably blink like owls, when, once or twice a year, perhaps, they happen to climb into the sunshine. All along the corridor, which I believe to be a mile in extent, we see stalls or shops in little alcoves, kept principally by women; they were of a ripe age, I was glad to observe, and certainly robbed England of none of its very moderate supply of feminine loveliness by their deeper than tomb-like interment. As you approach (and they are so accustomed to the dusky gaslight that they read all your characteristics afar off), they assail you with hungry entreaties to buy some of their merchandise, holding forth views of the tunnel put up in cases of Derbyshire spar, with a magnifying glass at one end to make the vista more effective. They offer you, besides, cheap jewelry, sunny topazes, and resplendent emeralds for sixpence, and diamonds as big as the Kohinoor at a not much heavier cost, together with a multifarious trumpery which has died out of the upper world to reappear in this Tartarean bazaar. That you may fancy yourself still in the realms of the living, they urge you to partake of cakes, candy, ginger-beer, and such small refreshment, more suitable, how-

ever, for the shadowy appetite of ghosts than for the sturdy stomachs of Englishmen. The most capacious of the shops contains a dioramic exhibition of cities and scenes in the daylight world, with a dreary glimmer of gas among them all; so that they serve well enough to represent the dim, unsatisfactory remembrances that dead people might be supposed to retain from their past lives, mixing them up with the ghastliness of their unsubstantial state. I dwell the more upon these trifles, and do my best to give them a mockery of importance, because, if these are nothing, then all this elaborate contrivance and mighty piece of work has been wrought in vain. The Englishman has burrowed under the bed of his great river, and set ships of two or three thousand tons a-rolling over his head, only to provide new sites for a few old women to sell cakes and ginger-beer!

Yet the conception was a grand one; and though it has proved an absolute failure, swallowing an immensity of toil and money, with annual returns hardly sufficient to keep the pavement free from the ooze of subterranean springs, yet it needs, I presume, only an expenditure three or four (or, for aught I know, twenty) times

as large, to make the enterprise brilliantly successful. The descent is so great from the bank of the river to its surface, and the tunnel dips so profoundly under the river's bed, that the approaches on either side must commence a long way off, in order to render the entrance accessible to horsemen or vehicles; so that the larger part of the cost of the whole affair should have been expended on its margins. It has turned out a sublime piece of folly; and when the New-Zealander of distant ages shall have moralized sufficiently among the ruins of London Bridge, he will bethink himself that somewhere thereabout was the marvelous Tunnel, the very existence of which will seem to him as incredible as that of the hanging gardens of Babylon. But the Thames will long ago have broken through the massive arch, and choked up the corridors with mud and sand and with the large stones of the structure itself, intermixed with skeletons of drowned people, the rusty ironwork of sunken vessels, and the great many such precious and curious things as a river always contrives to hide in its bosom; the entrance will have been obliterated, and its very site forgotten beyond the memory

of twenty generations of men, and the whole neighborhood be held a dangerous spot on account of the malaria; insomuch that the traveler will make but a brief and careless inquisition for the traces of the old wonder, and will stake his credit before the public, in some Pacific Monthly of that day, that the story of it is but a myth, though enriched with a spiritual profundity which he will proceed to unfold.

Yet it is impossible (for a Yankee, at least) to see so much magnificent ingenuity thrown away, without trying to endow the unfortunate result with some kind of usefulness, though perhaps widely different from the purpose of its original conception. In former ages, the mile-long corridors, with their numerous alcoves, might have been utilized as a series of dungeons, the fittest of all possible receptacles for prisoners of state. Dethroned monarchs and fallen statesmen would not have needed to remonstrate against a domicile so spacious, so deeply secluded from the world's scorn, and so admirably in accordance with their thenceforward sunless fortunes. An alcove here might have suited Sir Walter Raleigh better than that darksome hiding-place communicating with the great cham-

ber in the Tower, pacing from end to end of which he meditated upon his "History of the World." His track would here have been straight and narrow, indeed, and would therefore have lacked somewhat of the freedom that his intellect demanded; and yet the length to which his footsteps might have traveled forth and retraced themselves would partly have harmonized his physical movement with the grand curves and planetary returns of his thought, through cycles of majestic periods. Having it in his mind to compose the world's history, methinks he could have asked no better retirement than such a cloister as this, insulated from all the seductions of mankind and womankind, deep beneath their mysteries and motives, down into the heart of things, full of personal reminiscences in order to the comprehensive measurement and verification of historic records, seeing into the secrets of human nature, — secrets that daylight never yet revealed to mortal, — but detecting their whole scope and purport with the infallible eyes of unbroken solitude and night. And then the shades of the old mighty men might have risen from their still profounder abodes and joined him in the dim

corridor, treading beside him with an antique stateliness of mien, telling him in melancholy tones, grand, but always melancholy, of the greater ideas and purposes which their most renowned performances so imperfectly carried out; that, magnificent successes in the view of all posterity, they were but failures to those who planned them. As Raleigh was a navigator, Noah would have explained to him the peculiarities of construction that made the ark so seaworthy; as Raleigh was a statesman, Moses would have discussed with him the principles of laws and government; as Raleigh was a soldier, Cæsar and Hannibal would have held debate in his presence, with this martial student for their umpire; as Raleigh was a poet, David, or whatever most illustrious bard he might call up, would have touched his harp, and made manifest all the true significance of the past by means of song and the subtle intelligences of music.

Meanwhile, I had forgotten that Sir Walter Raleigh's century knew nothing of gaslight, and that it would require a prodigious and wasteful expenditure of tallow-candles to illuminate the tunnel sufficiently to discern even a ghost. On this

account, however, it would be all the more suitable place of confinement for a metaphysician, to keep him from bewildering mankind with his shadowy speculations; and, being shut off from external converse, the dark corridor would help him to make rich discoveries in those cavernous regions and mysterious by-paths of the intellect, which he had so long accustomed himself to explore. But how would every successive age rejoice in so secure a habitation for its reformers, and especially for each best and wisest man that happened to be then alive! He seeks to burn up our whole system of society, under pretense of purifying it from its abuses! Away with him into the tunnel, and let him begin by setting the Thames on fire, if he is able!

If not precisely these, yet akin to these were some of the fantasies that haunted me as I passed under the river: for the place is suggestive of such idle and irresponsible stuff by its own abortive character, its lack of whereabout on upper earth, or any solid foundation of realities. Could I have looked forward a few years, I might have regretted that American enterprise had not provided a similar tunnel, under the Hudson or the Potomac, for the con-

venience of our National Government in times hardly yet gone by. It would be delightful to clap up all the enemies of our peace and Union in the dark together, and there let them abide, listening to the monotonous roll of the river above their heads, or perhaps in a state of miraculously suspended animation, until, — be it after months, years, or centuries, — when the turmoil shall be all over, the Wrong washed away in blood (since that must needs be the cleansing fluid), and the Right firmly rooted in the soil which that blood will have enriched, they might crawl forth again and catch a single glimpse at their redeemed country, and feel it to be a better land than they deserve, and die!

I was not sorry when the daylight reached me after a much briefer abode in the nether regions than, I fear, would await the troublesome personages just hinted at. Emerging on the Surrey side of the Thames, I found myself in Rotherhithe, a neighborhood not unfamiliar to the readers of old books of maritime adventure. There being a ferry hard by the mouth of the tunnel, I recrossed the river in the primitive fashion of an open boat, which the conflict of wind and tide, together with the

swash and swell of the passing steamers, tossed high and low rather tumultuously. This inquietude of our frail skiff (which, indeed, bobbed up and down like a cork) so much alarmed an old lady, the only other passenger, that the boatmen essayed to comfort her. "Never fear, mother!" grumbled one of them; "we'll make the river as smooth as we can for you. We'll get a plane, and plane down the waves!" The joke may not read very brilliantly; but I make bold to record it as the only specimen that reached my ears of the old, rough water-wit for which the Thames used to be so celebrated. Passing directly along the line of the sunken tunnel, we landed in Wapping, which I should have presupposed to be the most tarry and pitchy spot on earth, swarming with old salts, and full of warm, bustling, coarse, homely, and cheerful life. Nevertheless, it turned out to be a cold and torpid neighborhood, mean, shabby, and unpicturesque, both as to its buildings and inhabitants: the latter comprising (so far as was visible to me) not a single unmistakable sailor, though plenty of land-sharks, who get a half-dishonest livelihood by business connected with the sea. Ale and spirit vaults

(as petty drinking-establishments are styled in England, pretending to contain vast cellars full of liquor within the compass of ten feet square above ground) were particularly abundant, together with apples, oranges, and oysters, the stalls of fishmongers and butchers, and slop-shops, where blue jackets and duck trousers swung and capered before the doors. Everything was on the poorest scale, and the place bore an aspect of unredeemable decay. From this remote point of London I strolled leisurely towards the heart of the city; while the streets, at first but thinly occupied by man or vehicle, got more and more thronged with foot-passengers, carts, drays, cabs, and the all-pervading and all-accommodating omnibus. But I lack courage, and feel that I should lack perseverance, as the gentlest reader would lack patience, to undertake a descriptive stroll through London streets; more especially as there would be a volume ready for the printer before we could reach a midway resting-place at Charing Cross. It will be the easier course to step aboard another passing steamer, and continue our trip up the Thames.

The next notable group of objects is an

assemblage of ancient walls, battlements, and turrets, out of the midst of which rises prominently one great square tower, of a grayish hue, bordered with white stone, and having a small turret at each corner of the roof. This central structure is the White Tower, and the whole circuit of ramparts and inclosed edifices constitutes what is known in English history, and still more widely and impressively in English poetry, as the Tower. A crowd of river-craft are generally moored in front of it; but if we look sharply at the right moment under the base of the rampart, we may catch a glimpse of an arched water-entrance, half submerged, past which the Thames glides as indifferently as if it were the mouth of a city-kennel. Nevertheless, it is the Traitor's Gate, a dreary kind of triumphal passage-way (now supposed to be shut up and barred forever), through which a multitude of noble and illustrious personages have entered the Tower and found it a brief resting-place on their way to heaven. Passing it many times, I never observed that anybody glanced at this shadowy and ominous trap-door, save myself. It is well that America exists, if it were only that her vagrant children may be impressed

and affected by the historical monuments of England in a degree of which the native inhabitants are evidently incapable. These matters are too familiar, too real, and too hopelessly built in amongst and mixed up with the common objects and affairs of life, to be easily susceptible of imaginative coloring in their minds; and even their poets and romancers feel it a toil, and almost a delusion, to extract poetic material out of what seems embodied poetry itself to an American. An Englishman cares nothing about the Tower, which to us is a haunted castle in dreamland. That honest and excellent gentleman, the late Mr. G. P. R. James (whose mechanical ability, one might have supposed, would nourish itself by devouring every old stone of such a structure), once assured me that he had never in his life set eyes upon the Tower, though for years an historic novelist in London.

Not to spend a whole summer's day upon the voyage, we will suppose ourselves to have reached London Bridge, and thence to have taken another steamer for a farther passage up the river. But here the memorable objects succeed each other so rapidly that I can spare but a single sentence

Tower of London

even for the great Dome, though I deem it more picturesque, in that dusky atmosphere, than St. Peter's in its clear blue sky.[1] I must mention, however (since everything connected with royalty is especially interesting to my dear countrymen), that I once saw a large and beautiful barge, splendidly gilded and ornamented, and overspread with a rich covering, lying at the pier nearest to St. Paul's Cathedral; it had the royal banner of Great Britain displayed, besides being decorated with a number of other flags; and many footmen (who are universally the grandest and gaudiest objects to be seen

[1] St. Paul's appeared to me unspeakably grand and noble, and the more so from the throng and bustle continually going on around its base, without in the least disturbing the sublime repose of its great dome, and, indeed, of all its massive height and breadth. Other edifices may crowd close to its foundation, and people may tramp as they like about it; but still the great cathedral is as quiet and serene as if it stood in the middle of Salisbury Plain. There cannot be anything else in its way so good in the world as just this effect of St. Paul's in the very heart and densest tumult of London. I do not know whether the church is built of marble, or of whatever other white or nearly white material; but in the time that it has been standing there, it has grown black with the smoke of ages, through which there are, nevertheless, gleams of white, that make a most picturesque impression on the whole. It is much better than staring white; the edifice would not be nearly so grand without this drapery of black. — II. 91.

in England at this day, and these were regal ones, in a bright scarlet livery bedizened with gold-lace, and white silk stockings) were in attendance. I know not what festive or ceremonial occasion may have drawn out this pageant; after all, it might have been merely a city-spectacle, appertaining to the Lord Mayor; but the sight had its value in bringing vividly before me the grand old times when the sovereign and nobles were accustomed to use the Thames as the high street of the metropolis, and join in pompous processions upon it; whereas, the desuetude of such customs nowadays has caused the whole show of river-life to consist in a multitude of smoke-begrimed steamers. An analogous change has taken place in the streets, where cabs and the omnibus have crowded out a rich variety of vehicles; and thus life gets more monotonous in hue from age to age, and appears to seize every opportunity to strip off a bit of its gold-lace among the wealthier classes, and to make itself decent in the lower ones.

Yonder is Whitefriars, the old rowdy Alsatia, now wearing as decorous a face as any other portion of London; and, adjoining it, the avenues and brick squares

St. Paul's Cathedral

of the Temple, with that historic garden, close upon the river-side, and still rich in shrubbery and flowers, where the partisans of York and Lancaster plucked the fatal roses, and scattered their pale and bloody petals over so many English battle-fields. Hard by, we see the long white front or rear of Somerset House, and, farther on, rise the two new Houses of Parliament, with a huge unfinished tower already hiding its imperfect summit in the smoky canopy, — the whole vast and cumbrous edifice a specimen of the best that modern architecture can effect, elaborately imitating the master-pieces of those simple ages when men "builded better than they knew."[1] Close by it, we have a glimpse

[1] After coming out of the Abbey, we looked at the two Houses of Parliament, directly across the way, — an immense structure, and certainly most splendid, built of a beautiful warm-colored stone. The building has a very elaborate finish, and delighted me at first; but by and by I began to be sensible of a weariness in the effect, a lack of variety in the plan and ornament, a deficiency of invention; so that instead of being more and more interested the longer one looks, as is the case with an old Gothic edifice, and continually reading deeper into it, one finds that one has seen all in seeing a little piece, and that the magnificent palace has nothing better to show one or to do for one. It is wonderful how the old weather-stained and smoke-blackened Abbey shames down this brand-newness; not that the Parliament Houses are not fine objects to look at too. — II. 105.

of the roof and upper towers of the holy Abbey; while that gray, ancestral pile on the opposite side of the river is Lambeth Palace, a venerable group of halls and turrets, chiefly built of brick, but with at least one large tower of stone.[1] In our course, we have passed beneath half a dozen bridges, and, emerging out of the black heart of London, shall soon reach a cleanly suburb, where old Father Thames, if I remember, begins to put on an aspect of unpolluted innocence. And now we look back upon the mass of innumerable roofs, out of which rise steeples, towers, columns, and the great crowning Dome, — look back, in short, upon that mystery of the world's proudest city, amid which a man so longs and loves to be; not, perhaps, because it contains much that is positively admirable and enjoyable, but because, at all events, the world has nothing better. The cream of external life is there;

[1] It stands immediately on the bank of the river, not far above the bridge. We merely walked round it, and saw only an old stone tower or two, partially renewed with brick, and a high connecting wall, within which appeared gables and other portions of the palace, all of an ancient plan and venerable aspect, though evidently much patched up and restored in the course of the many ages since its foundation. — II. 193.

and whatever merely intellectual or material good we fail to find perfect in London, we may as well content ourselves to seek that unattainable thing no farther on this earth.

The steamer terminates its trip at Chelsea, an old town endowed with a prodigious number of pothouses, and some famous gardens, called the Cremorne, for public amusement. The most noticeable thing, however, is Chelsea Hospital, which, like that of Greenwich, was founded, I believe, by Charles II. (whose bronze statue, in the guise of an old Roman, stands in the centre of the quadrangle), and appropriated as a home for aged and infirm soldiers of the British army. The edifices are of three stories, with windows in the high roofs, and are built of dark, sombre brick, with stone edgings and facings. The effect is by no means that of grandeur (which is somewhat disagreeably an attribute of Greenwich Hospital), but a quiet and venerable neatness. At each extremity of the street-front there is a spacious and hospitably open gateway, lounging about which I saw some gray veterans in long scarlet coats of an antique fashion, and the cocked hats of a century ago, or occasionally a

modern foraging-cap. Almost all of them moved with a rheumatic gait, two or three stumped on wooden legs, and here and there an arm was missing. Inquiring of one of these fragmentary heroes whether a stranger could be admitted to see the establishment, he replied most cordially, "Oh yes, sir, — anywhere! Walk in and go where you please, — upstairs, or anywhere!" So I entered, and, passing along the inner side of the quadrangle, came to the door of the chapel, which forms a part of the contiguity of edifices next the street. Here another pensioner, an old warrior of exceedingly peaceable and Christian demeanor, touched his three-cornered hat and asked if I wished to see the interior; to which I assenting, he unlocked the door, and we went in.

The chapel consists of a great hall with a vaulted roof, and over the altar is a large painting in fresco, the subject of which I did not trouble myself to make out. More appropriate adornments of the place, dedicated as well to martial reminiscences as religious worship, are the long ranges of dusty and tattered banners, that hang from their staves all round the ceiling of the chapel. They are trophies of battles

fought and won in every quarter of the world, comprising the captured flags of all the nations with whom the British lion has waged war since James II.'s time, — French, Dutch, East Indian, Prussian, Russian, Chinese, and American, — collected together in this consecrated spot, not to symbolize that there shall be no more discord upon earth, but drooping over the aisle in sullen, though peaceable, humiliation. Yes, I said "American" among the rest; for the good old pensioner mistook me for an Englishman, and failed not to point out (and, methought, with an especial emphasis of triumph) some flags that had been taken at Bladensburg and Washington. I fancied, indeed, that they hung a little higher and drooped a little lower than any of their companions in disgrace. It is a comfort, however, that their proud devices are already indistinguishable, or nearly so, owing to dust and tatters and the kind offices of the moths, and that they will soon rot from the banner-staves and be swept out in unrecognized fragments from the chapel-door.

It is a good method of teaching a man how imperfectly cosmopolitan he is, to show him his country's flag occupying a

position of dishonor in a foreign land. But, in truth, the whole system of a people crowing over its military triumphs had far better be dispensed with, both on account of the ill-blood that it helps to keep fermenting among the nations, and because it operates as an accumulative inducement to future generations to aim at a kind of glory, the gain of which has generally proved more ruinous than its loss. I heartily wish that every trophy of victory might crumble away, and that every reminiscence or tradition of a hero, from the beginning of the world to this day, could pass out of all men's memories at once and forever. I might feel very differently, to be sure, if we Northerners had anything especially valuable to lose by the fading of those illuminated names.

I gave the pensioner (but I am afraid there may have been a little affectation in it) a magnificent guerdon of all the silver I had in my pocket, to requite him for having unintentionally stirred up my patriotic susceptibilities. He was a meek-looking, kindly old man, with a humble freedom and affability of manner that made it pleasant to converse with him. Old soldiers, I know not why, seem to be more

accostable than old sailors. One is apt to hear a growl beneath the smoothest courtesy of the latter. The mild veteran, with his peaceful voice, and gentle reverend aspect, told me that he had fought at a cannon all through the Battle of Waterloo, and escaped unhurt; he had now been in the hospital four or five years, and was married, but necessarily underwent a separation from his wife, who lived outside of the gates. To my inquiry whether his fellow-pensioners were comfortable and happy, he answered, with great alacrity, "Oh yes, sir!" qualifying his evidence, after a moment's consideration, by saying in an undertone, "There are some people, your Honor knows, who could not be comfortable anywhere." I did know it, and fear that the system of Chelsea Hospital allows too little of that wholesome care and regulation of their own occupations and interests which might assuage the sting of life to those naturally uncomfortable individuals by giving them something external to think about. But my old friend here was happy in the hospital, and by this time, very likely, is happy in heaven, in spite of the bloodshed that he may have caused by touching off a cannon at Waterloo.

Crossing Battersea Bridge, in the neighborhood of Chelsea, I remember seeing a distant gleam of the Crystal Palace, glimmering afar in the afternoon sunshine like an imaginary structure, — an air-castle by chance descended upon earth, and resting there one instant before it vanished, as we sometimes see a soap-bubble touch unharmed on the carpet, — a thing of only momentary visibility and no substance, destined to be overburdened and crushed down by the first cloud-shadow that might fall upon that spot. Even as I looked, it disappeared.[1] Shall I attempt a picture of this exhalation of modern ingenuity, or what else shall I try to paint? Everything in London and its vicinity has been depicted innumerable times, but never once translated into intelligible images; it is an "old, old story," never yet told, nor to be told. While writing these reminiscences, I am continually impressed with the futility of

[1] The Crystal Palace gleamed in the sunshine; but I do not think a very impressive edifice can be built of glass, — light and airy, to be sure, but still it will be no other than an overgrown conservatory. It is unlike anything else in England; uncongenial with the English character, without privacy, destitute of mass, weight, and shadow, unsusceptible of ivy, lichens, or any mellowness from age. — II. 135.

the effort to give any creative truth to my sketch, so that it might produce such pictures in the reader's mind as would cause the original scenes to appear familiar when afterwards beheld. Nor have other writers often been more successful in representing definite objects prophetically to my own mind. In truth, I believe that the chief delight and advantage of this kind of literature is not for any real information that it supplies to untraveled people, but for reviving the recollections and reawakening the emotions of persons already acquainted with the scenes described. Thus I found an exquisite pleasure, the other day, in reading Mr. Tuckerman's "Month in England," — a fine example of the way in which a refined and cultivated American looks at the Old Country, the things that he naturally seeks there, and the modes of feeling and reflection which they excite. Correct outlines avail little or nothing, though truth of coloring may be somewhat more efficacious. Impressions, however, states of mind produced by interesting and remarkable objects, these, if truthfully and vividly recorded, may work a genuine effect, and, though but the result of what we see, go further towards representing the actual

scene than any direct effort to paint it. Give the emotions that cluster about it, and, without being able to analyze the spell by which it is summoned up, you get something like a simulachre of the object in the midst of them. From some of the above reflections I draw the comfortable inference, that, the longer and better known a thing may be, so much the more eligible is it as the subject of a descriptive sketch.

On a Sunday afternoon, I passed through a side-entrance in the time-blackened wall of a place of worship, and found myself among a congregation assembled in one of the transepts and the immediately contiguous portion of the nave. It was a vast old edifice, spacious enough, within the extent covered by its pillared roof and overspread by its stone pavement, to accommodate the whole of church-going London, and with a far wider and loftier concave than any human power of lungs could fill with audible prayer. Oaken benches were arranged in the transept, on one of which I seated myself, and joined, as well as I knew how, in the sacred business that was going forward. But when it came to the sermon, the voice of the preacher was puny, and so were his thoughts, and both

seemed impertinent at such a time and place, where he and all of us were bodily included within a sublime act of religion, which could be seen above and around us and felt beneath our feet. The structure itself was the worship of the devout men of long ago, miraculously preserved in stone without losing an atom of its fragrance and fervor; it was a kind of anthem-strain that they had sung and poured out of the organ in centuries gone by; and being so grand and sweet, the Divine benevolence had willed it to be prolonged for the behoof of auditors unborn. I therefore came to the conclusion, that, in my individual case, it would be better and more reverent to let my eyes wander about the edifice than to fasten them and my thoughts on the evidently uninspired mortal who was venturing — and felt it no venture at all — to speak here above his breath.

The interior of Westminster Abbey (for the reader recognized it, no doubt, the moment we entered) is built of rich brown stone; and the whole of it — the lofty roof, the tall, clustered pillars, and the pointed arches — appears to be in consummate repair. At all points where decay has laid its finger, the structure is clamped with

iron or otherwise carefully protected; and being thus watched over, — whether as a place of ancient sanctity, a noble specimen of Gothic art, or an object of national interest and pride, — it may reasonably be expected to survive for as many ages as have passed over it already. It was sweet to feel its venerable quietude, its long-enduring peace, and yet to observe how kindly and even cheerfully it received the sunshine of to-day, which fell from the great windows into the fretted aisles and arches that laid aside somewhat of their aged gloom to welcome it. Sunshine always seems friendly to old abbeys, churches, and castles, kissing them, as it were, with a more affectionate, though still reverential familiarity, than it accords to edifices of later date. A square of golden light lay on the sombre pavement of the nave, afar off, falling through the grand western entrance, the folding leaves of which were wide open, and afforded glimpses of people passing to and fro in the outer world, while we sat dimly enveloped in the solemnity of antique devotion. In the south transept, separated from us by the full breadth of the minster, there were painted glass windows, of which the uppermost appeared to

be a great orb of many-colored radiance, being, indeed, a cluster of saints and angels whose glorified bodies formed the rays of an aureole emanating from a cross in the midst. These windows are modern, but combine softness with wonderful brilliancy of effect. Through the pillars and arches, I saw that the walls in that distant region of the edifice were almost wholly incrusted with marble, now grown yellow with time, no blank, unlettered slabs, but memorials of such men as their respective generations deemed wisest and bravest. Some of them were commemorated merely by inscriptions on mural tablets, others by sculptured bas-reliefs, others (once famous, but now forgotten, generals or admirals, these) by ponderous tombs that aspired towards the roof of the aisle, or partly curtained the immense arch of a window. These mountains of marble were peopled with the sisterhood of Allegory, winged trumpeters, and classic figures in full-bottomed wigs; but it was strange to observe how the old Abbey melted all such absurdities into the breadth of its own grandeur, even magnifying itself by what would elsewhere have been ridiculous. Methinks it is the test of Gothic sublimity to overpower the ridic-

ulous without deigning to hide it; and these grotesque monuments of the last century answer a similar purpose with the grinning faces which the old architects scattered among their most solemn conceptions.

From these distant wanderings (it was my first visit to Westminster Abbey, and I would gladly have taken it all in at a glance) my eyes came back and began to investigate what was immediately about me in the transept. Close at my elbow was the pedestal of Canning's statue. Next beyond it was a massive tomb, on the spacious tablet of which reposed the full-length figures of a marble lord and lady, whom an inscription announced to be the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, — the historic Duke of Charles I.'s time, and the fantastic Duchess, traditionally remembered by her poems and plays. She was of a family, as the record on her tomb proudly informed us, of which all the brothers had been valiant and all the sisters virtuous. A recent statue of Sir John Malcolm, the new marble as white as snow, held the next place; and near by was a mural monument and bust of Sir Peter Warren. The round visage of this old British admiral

has a certain interest for a New-Englander, because it was by no merit of his own (though he took care to assume it as such), but by the valor and warlike enterprise of our colonial forefathers, especially the stout men of Massachusetts, that he won rank and renown, and a tomb in Westminster Abbey. Lord Mansfield, a huge mass of marble done into the guise of a judicial gown and wig, with a stern face in the midst of the latter, sat on the other side of the transept; and on the pedestal beside him was a figure of Justice, holding forth, instead of the customary grocer's scales, an actual pair of brass steelyards. It is an ancient and classic instrument, undoubtedly; but I had supposed that Portia (when Shylock's pound of flesh was to be weighed) was the only judge that ever really called for it in a court of justice. Pitt and Fox were in the same distinguished company; and John Kemble, in Roman costume, stood not far off, but strangely shorn of the dignity that is said to have enveloped him like a mantle in his lifetime. Perhaps the evanescent majesty of the stage is incompatible with the long endurance of marble and the solemn reality of the tomb; though, on the other hand,

almost every illustrious personage here represented has been invested with more or less of stage-trickery by his sculptor. In truth, the artist (unless there be a divine efficacy in his touch, making evident a heretofore hidden dignity in the actual form) feels it an imperious law to remove his subject as far from the aspect of ordinary life as may be possible without sacrificing every trace of resemblance. The absurd effect of the contrary course is very remarkable in the statue of Mr. Wilberforce, whose actual self, save for the lack of color, I seemed to behold, seated just across the aisle.

This excellent man appears to have sunk into himself in a sitting posture, with a thin leg crossed over his knee, a book in one hand, and a finger of the other under his chin, I believe, or applied to the side of his nose, or to some equally familiar purpose; while his exceedingly homely and wrinkled face, held a little on one side, twinkles at you with the shrewdest complacency, as if he were looking right into your eyes, and twigged something there which you had half a mind to conceal from him. He keeps this look so pertinaciously that you feel it to be insufferably

impertinent, and bethink yourself what common ground there may be between yourself and a stone image, enabling you to resent it. I have no doubt that the statue is as like Mr. Wilberforce as one pea to another, and you might fancy, that, at some ordinary moment, when he least expected it, and before he had time to smooth away his knowing complication of wrinkles, he had seen the Gorgon's head, and whitened into marble, — not only his personal self, but his coat and small-clothes, down to a button and the minutest crease of the cloth. The ludicrous result marks the impropriety of bestowing the age-long duration of marble upon small, characteristic individualities, such as might come within the province of waxen imagery. The sculptor should give permanence to the figure of a great man in his mood of broad and grand composure, which would obliterate all mean peculiarities; for, if the original were unaccustomed to such a mood, or if his features were incapable of assuming the guise, it seems questionable whether he could really have been entitled to a marble immortality. In point of fact, however, the English face and form are seldom statuesque, however illustrious the individual.

It ill becomes me, perhaps, to have lapsed into this mood of half-jocose criticism in describing my first visit to Westminster Abbey, a spot which I had dreamed about more reverentially, from my childhood upward, than any other in the world, and which I then beheld, and now look back upon, with profound gratitude to the men who built it, and a kindly interest, I may add, in the humblest personage that has contributed his little all to its impressiveness, by depositing his dust or his memory there. But it is a characteristic of this grand edifice that it permits you to smile as freely under the roof of its central nave as if you stood beneath the yet grander canopy of heaven. Break into laughter, if you feel inclined, provided the vergers do not hear it echoing among the arches. In an ordinary church you would keep your countenance for fear of disturbing the sanctities or proprieties of the place; but you need leave no honest and decorous portion of your human nature outside of these benign and truly hospitable walls. Their mild awfulness will take care of itself. Thus it does no harm to the general impression, when you come to be sensible that many of the monuments are ridiculous,

and commemorate a mob of people who are mostly forgotten in their graves, and few of whom ever deserved any better boon from posterity. You acknowledge the force of Sir Godfrey Kneller's objection to being buried in Westminster Abbey, because "they do bury fools there!" Nevertheless, these grotesque carvings of marble, that break out in dingy-white blotches on the old freestone of the interior walls, have come there by as natural a process as might cause mosses and ivy to cluster about the external edifice; for they are the historical and biographical record of each successive age, written with its own hand, and all the truer for the inevitable mistakes, and none the less solemn for the occasional absurdity. Though you entered the Abbey expecting to see the tombs only of the illustrious, you are content at last to read many names, both in literature and history, that have now lost the reverence of mankind, if indeed they ever really possessed it. Let these men rest in peace. Even if you miss a name or two that you hoped to find there, they may well be spared. It matters little a few more or less, or whether Westminster Abbey contains or lacks any one man's

grave, so long as the Centuries, each with the crowd of personages that it deemed memorable, have chosen it as their place of honored sepulture, and laid themselves down under its pavement. The inscriptions and devices on the walls are rich with evidences of the fluctuating tastes, fashions, manners, opinions, prejudices, follies, wisdoms, of the past, and thus they combine into a more truthful memorial of their dead times than any individual epitaph-maker ever meant to write.

When the services were over, many of the audience seemed inclined to linger in the nave or wander away among the mysterious aisles; for there is nothing in this world so fascinating as a Gothic minster, which always invites you deeper and deeper into its heart both by vast revelations and shadowy concealments. Through the open-work screen that divides the nave from the chancel and choir, we could discern the gleam of a marvelous window, but were debarred from entrance into that more sacred precinct of the Abbey by the vergers. These vigilant officials (doing their duty all the more strenuously because no fees could be exacted from Sunday visitors) flourished their staves, and drove

us towards the grand entrance like a flock of sheep. Lingering through one of the aisles, I happened to look down, and found my foot upon a stone inscribed with this familiar exclamation, "*O rare Ben Jonson!*" and remembered the story of stout old Ben's burial in that spot, standing upright, — not, I presume, on account of any unseemly reluctance on his part to lie down in the dust, like other men, but because standing-room was all that could reasonably be demanded for a poet among the slumberous notabilities of his age. It made me weary to think of it! — such a prodigious length of time to keep one's feet! — apart from the honor of the thing, it would certainly have been better for Ben to stretch himself at ease in some country churchyard. To this day, however, I fancy that there is a contemptuous alloy mixed up with the admiration which the higher classes of English society profess for their literary men.

Another day — in truth, many other days — I sought out Poets' Corner, and found a sign-board and pointed finger directing the visitor to it, on the corner house of a little lane leading towards the rear of the Abbey. The entrance is at the

southeastern end of the south transept, and it is used, on ordinary occasions, as the only free mode of access to the building. It is no spacious arch, but a small, lowly door, passing through which, and pushing aside an inner screen that partly keeps out an exceedingly chill wind, you find yourself in a dim nook of the Abbey, with the busts of poets gazing at you from the otherwise bare stone-work of the walls. Great poets, too; for Ben Jonson is right behind the door, and Spenser's tablet is next, and Butler's on the same side of the transept, and Milton's (whose bust you know at once by its resemblance to one of his portraits, though older, more wrinkled, and sadder than that) is close by, and a profile-medallion of Gray beneath it. A window high aloft sheds down a dusky daylight on these and many other sculptured marbles, now as yellow as old parchment, that cover the three walls of the nook up to an elevation of about twenty feet above the pavement. It seemed to me that I had always been familiar with the spot. Enjoying a humble intimacy — and how much of my life had else been a dreary solitude! — with many of its inhabitants, I could not feel myself a stranger there. It was delightful to be

among them. There was a genial awe, mingled with a sense of kind and friendly presences about me; and I was glad, moreover, at finding so many of them there together, in fit companionship, mutually recognized and duly honored, all reconciled now, whatever distant generations, whatever personal hostility or other miserable impediment, had divided them far asunder while they lived. I have never felt a similar interest in any other tombstones, nor have I ever been deeply moved by the imaginary presence of other famous dead people. A poet's ghost is the only one that survives for his fellow-mortals, after his bones are in the dust, — and he not ghostly, but cherishing many hearts with his own warmth in the chillest atmosphere of life. What other fame is worth aspiring for? Or, let me speak it more boldly, what other long-enduring fame can exist? We neither remember nor care anything for the past, except as the poet has made it intelligibly noble and sublime to our comprehension. The shades of the mighty have no substance; they flit ineffectually about the darkened stage where they performed their momentary parts, save when the poet has thrown his own creative soul

into them, and imparted a more vivid life than ever they were able to manifest to mankind while they dwelt in the body. And therefore — though he cunningly disguises himself in their armor, their robes of state, or kingly purple — it is not the statesman, the warrior, or the monarch that survives, but the despised poet, whom they may have fed with their crumbs, and to whom they owe all that they now are or have, — a name ![1]

[1] *September* 30, 1855. Poets' Corner has never seemed like a strange place to me; it has been familiar from the very first; at all events, I cannot now recollect the previous conception, of which the reality has taken the place. I seem always to have known that somewhat dim corner, with the bare brown stone-work of the old edifice aloft, and a window shedding down its light on the marble busts and tablets, yellow with time, that cover the three walls of the nook up to a height of about twenty feet. Prior's is the largest and richest monument. It is observable that the bust and monument of Congreve are in a distant part of the Abbey. His duchess probably thought it a degradation to bring a gentleman among the beggarly poets. — II. 153.

November 12, 1857. We found our way to Poets' Corner, however, and entered those holy precincts, which looked very dusky and grim in the smoky light. . . . I was strongly impressed with the perception that very commonplace people compose the great bulk of society in the home of the illustrious dead. It is wonderful how few names there are that one cares anything about a hundred years after their departure; but perhaps each

In the foregoing paragraph I seem to have been betrayed into a flight above or beyond the customary level that best agrees with me; but it represents fairly enough the emotions with which I passed from Poets' Corner into the chapels, which contain the sepulchres of kings and great people. They are magnificent even now, and must have been inconceivably so when the marble slabs and pillars wore their new polish, and the statues retained the brilliant colors with which they were originally painted, and the shrines their rich gilding, of which the sunlight still shows a glimmer or a streak, though the sunbeam itself looks tarnished with antique dust. Yet this recondite portion of the Abbey presents few memorials of personages whom we care to remember. The shrine of Edward the Confessor has a certain interest, because it was so long held in religious reverence, and because the very dust that settled upon it was formerly worth gold. The helmet and war-saddle of Henry V., worn

generation acts in good faith in canonizing its own men. . . . But the fame of the buried person does not make the marble live, — the marble keeps merely a cold and sad memory of a man who would else be forgotten. No man who needs a monument ever ought to have one. — II. 565.

at Agincourt, and now suspended above his tomb, are memorable objects, but more for Shakespeare's sake than the victor's own. Rank has been the general passport to admission here. Noble and regal dust is as cheap as dirt under the pavement. I am glad to recollect, indeed (and it is too characteristic of the right English spirit not to be mentioned), one or two gigantic statues of great mechanicians, who contributed largely to the material welfare of England, sitting familiarly in their marble chairs among forgotten kings and queens. Otherwise, the quaintness of the earlier monuments, and the antique beauty of some of them, are what chiefly gives them value. Nevertheless, Addison is buried among the men of rank; not on the plea of his literary fame, however, but because he was connected with nobility by marriage, and had been a Secretary of State. His gravestone is inscribed with a resounding verse from Tickell's lines to his memory, the only lines by which Tickell himself is now remembered, and which (as I discovered a little while ago) he mainly filched from an obscure versifier of somewhat earlier date.

Returning to Poets' Corner, I looked

again at the walls, and wondered how the requisite hospitality can be shown to poets of our own and the succeeding ages. There is hardly a foot of space left, although room has lately been found for a bust of Southey and a full-length statue of Campbell. At best, only a little portion of the Abbey is dedicated to poets, literary men, musical composers, and others of the gentle artist breed, and even into that small nook of sanctity men of other pursuits have thought it decent to intrude themselves. Methinks the tuneful throng, being at home here, should recollect how they were treated in their lifetime, and turn the cold shoulder, looking askance at nobles and official personages, however worthy of honorable interment elsewhere. Yet it shows aptly and truly enough what portion of the world's regard and honor has heretofore been awarded to literary eminence in comparison with other modes of greatness, — this dimly lighted corner (nor even that quietly to themselves) in the vast minster the walls of which are sheathed and hidden under marble that has been wasted upon the illustrious obscure. Nevertheless, it may not be worth while to quarrel with the world on this account; for, to confess the

very truth, their own little nook contains more than one poet whose memory is kept alive by his monument, instead of imbuing the senseless stone with a spiritual immortality, — men of whom you do not ask, "Where is he?" but, "Why is he here?" I estimate that all the literary people who really make an essential part of one's inner life, including the period since English literature first existed, might have ample elbow-room to sit down and quaff their draughts of Castaly round Chaucer's broad, horizontal tombstone. These divinest poets consecrate the spot, and throw a reflected glory over the humblest of their companions. And as for the latter, it is to be hoped that they may have long outgrown the characteristic jealousies and morbid sensibilities of their craft, and have found out the little value (probably not amounting to sixpence in immortal currency) of the posthumous renown which they once aspired to win. It would be a poor compliment to a dead poet to fancy him leaning out of the sky and snuffing up the impure breath of earthly praise.

Yet we cannot easily rid ourselves of the notion that those who have bequeathed us the inheritance of an undying song

would fain be conscious of its endless reverberations in the hearts of mankind, and would delight, among sublimer enjoyments, to see their names emblazoned in such a treasure-place of great memories as Westminster Abbey. There are some men, at all events, — true and tender poets, moreover, and fully deserving of the honor, — whose spirits, I feel certain, would linger a little while about Poets' Corner, for the sake of witnessing their own apotheosis among their kindred. They have had a strong natural yearning, not so much for applause as sympathy, which the cold fortune of their lifetime did but scantily supply; so that this unsatisfied appetite may make itself felt upon sensibilities at once so delicate and retentive, even a step or two beyond the grave. Leigh Hunt, for example, would be pleased, even now, if he could learn that his bust had been reposited in the midst of the old poets whom he admired and loved; though there is hardly a man among the authors of to-day and yesterday whom the judgment of Englishmen would be less likely to place there. He deserves it, however, if not for his verse (the value of which I do not estimate, never having been able to read it), yet for

his delightful prose, his unmeasured poetry, the inscrutable happiness of his touch, working soft miracles by a life-process like the growth of grass and flowers. As with all such gentle writers, his page sometimes betrayed a vestige of affectation, but, the next moment, a rich, natural luxuriance overgrew and buried it out of sight. I knew him a little, and (since, Heaven be praised, few English celebrities whom I chanced to meet have enfranchised my pen by their decease, and as I assume no liberties with living men) I will conclude this rambling article by sketching my first interview with Leigh Hunt.

He was then at Hammersmith, occupying a very plain and shabby little house, in a contiguous range of others like it, with no prospect but that of an ugly village street, and certainly nothing to gratify his craving for a tasteful environment, inside or out. A slatternly maid-servant opened the door for us, and he himself stood in the entry, a beautiful and venerable old man, buttoned to the chin in a black dress-coat, tall and slender, with a countenance quietly alive all over, and the gentlest and most naturally courteous manner. He ushered us into his little study, or parlor,

or both, — a very forlorn room, with poor paper-hangings and carpet, few books, no pictures that I remember, and an awful lack of upholstery. I touch distinctly upon these external blemishes and this nudity of adornment, not that they would be worth mentioning in a sketch of other remarkable persons, but because Leigh Hunt was born with such a faculty of enjoying all beautiful things that it seemed as if Fortune did him as much wrong in not supplying them as in withholding a sufficiency of vital breath from ordinary men. All kinds of mild magnificence, tempered by his taste, would have become him well; but he had not the grim dignity that assumes nakedness as the better robe.

I have said that he was a beautiful old man. In truth, I never saw a finer countenance, either as to the mould of features or the expression, nor any that showed the play of feeling so perfectly without the slightest theatrical emphasis. It was like a child's face in this respect. At my first glimpse of him, when he met us in the entry, I discerned that he was old, his long hair being white and his wrinkles many; it was an aged visage, in short, such as I had not at all expected to see, in spite of

dates, because his books talk to the reader with the tender vivacity of youth. But when he began to speak, and as he grew more earnest in conversation, I ceased to be sensible of his age; sometimes, indeed, its dusky shadow darkened through the gleam which his sprightly thoughts diffused about his face, but then another flash of youth came out of his eyes and made an illumination again. I never witnessed such a wonderfully illusive transformation, before or since; and, to this day, trusting only to my recollection, I should find it difficult to decide which was his genuine and stable predicament, — youth or age. I have met no Englishman whose manners seemed to me so agreeable, soft, rather than polished, wholly unconventional, the natural growth of a kindly and sensitive disposition without any reference to rule, or else obedient to some rule so subtile that the nicest observer could not detect the application of it.

His eyes were dark and very fine, and his delightful voice accompanied their visible language like music. He appeared to be exceedingly appreciative of whatever was passing among those who surrounded him, and especially of the vicissitudes in

the consciousness of the person to whom he happened to be addressing himself at the moment. I felt that no effect upon my mind of what he uttered, no emotion, however transitory, in myself, escaped his notice, though not from any positive vigilance on his part, but because his faculty of observation was so penetrative and delicate; and to say the truth, it a little confused me to discern always a ripple on his mobile face, responsive to any slightest breeze that passed over the inner reservoir of my sentiments, and seemed thence to extend to a similar reservoir within himself. On matters of feeling, and within a certain depth, you might spare yourself the trouble of utterance, because he already knew what you wanted to say, and perhaps a little more than you would have spoken. His figure was full of gentle movement, though, somehow, without disturbing its quietude; and as he talked, he kept folding his hands nervously, and betokened in many ways a fine and immediate sensibility, quick to feel pleasure or pain, though scarcely capable, I should imagine, of a passionate experience in either direction. There was not an English trait in him from head to foot, morally, intellectually, or physically. Beef,

ale, or stout, brandy or port-wine, entered not at all into his composition. In his earlier life, he appears to have given evidences of courage and sturdy principle, and of a tendency to fling himself into the rough struggle of humanity on the liberal side. It would be taking too much upon myself to affirm that this was merely a projection of his fancy world into the actual, and that he never could have hit a downright blow, and was altogether an unsuitable person to receive one. I beheld him not in his armor, but in his peacefulest robes. Nevertheless, drawing my conclusion merely from what I saw, it would have occurred to me that his main deficiency was a lack of grit. Though anything but a timid man, the combative and defensive elements were not prominently developed in his character, and could have been made available only when he put an unnatural force upon his instincts. It was on this account, and also because of the fineness of his nature generally, that the English appreciated him no better, and left this sweet and delicate poet poor, and with scanty laurels, in his declining age.

It was not, I think, from his American blood that Leigh Hunt derived either his

amiability or his peaceful inclinations; at least, I do not see how we can reasonably claim the former quality as a national characteristic, though the latter might have been fairly inherited from his ancestors on the mother's side, who were Pennsylvania Quakers. But the kind of excellence that distinguished him — his fineness, subtilty, and grace — was that which the richest cultivation has heretofore tended to develop in the happier examples of American genius, and which (though I say it a little reluctantly) is perhaps what our future intellectual advancement may make general among us. His person, at all events, was thoroughly American, and of the best type, as were likewise his manners; for we are the best as well as the worst mannered people in the world.

Leigh Hunt loved dearly to be praised. That is to say, he desired sympathy as a flower seeks sunshine, and perhaps profited by it as much in the richer depth of coloring that it imparted to his ideas. In response to all that we ventured to express about his writings (and, for my part, I went quite to the extent of my conscience, which was a long way, and there left the matter to a lady and a young girl, who happily

were with me), his face shone, and he manifested great delight, with a perfect, and yet delicate, frankness, for which I loved him. He could not tell us, he said, the happiness that such appreciation gave him; it always took him by surprise, he remarked, for — perhaps because he cleaned his own boots, and performed other little ordinary offices for himself — he never had been conscious of anything wonderful in his own person. And then he smiled, making himself and all the poor little parlor about him beautiful thereby. It is usually the hardest thing in the world to praise a man to his face; but Leigh Hunt received the incense with such gracious satisfaction (feeling it to be sympathy, not vulgar praise), that the only difficulty was to keep the enthusiasm of the moment within the limit of permanent opinion. A storm had suddenly come up while we were talking; the rain poured, the lightning flashed, and the thunder broke; but I hope, and have great pleasure in believing, that it was a sunny hour for Leigh Hunt. Nevertheless, it was not to my voice that he most favorably inclined his ear, but to those of my companions. Women are the fit ministers at such a shrine.

He must have suffered keenly in his lifetime, and enjoyed keenly, keeping his emotions so much upon the surface as he seemed to do, and convenient for everybody to play upon. Being of a cheerful temperament, happiness had probably the upper-hand. His was a light, mildly joyous nature, gentle, graceful, yet seldom attaining to that deepest grace which results from power; for beauty, like woman, its human representative, dallies with the gentle, but yields its consummate favor only to the strong. I imagine that Leigh Hunt may have been more beautiful when I met him, both in person and character, than in his earlier days. As a young man, I could conceive of his being finical in certain moods, but not now, when the gravity of age shed a venerable grace about him. I rejoiced to hear him say that he was favored with most confident and cheering anticipations in respect to a future life; and there were abundant proofs, throughout our interview, of an unrepining spirit, resignation, quiet relinquishment of the worldly benefits that were denied him, thankful enjoyment of whatever he had to enjoy, and piety, and hope shining onward into the dusk, — all of which gave a rever-

ential cast to the feeling with which we parted from him. I wish that he could have had one full draught of prosperity before he died. As a matter of artistic propriety, it would have been delightful to see him inhabiting a beautiful house of his own, in an Italian climate, with all sorts of elaborate upholstery and minute elegances about him, and a succession of tender and lovely women to praise his sweet poetry from morning to night. I hardly know whether it is my fault, or the effect of a weakness in Leigh Hunt's character, that I should be sensible of a regret of this nature, when, at the same time, I sincerely believe that he has found an infinity of better things in the world whither he has gone.

At our leave-taking he grasped me warmly by both hands, and seemed as much interested in our whole party as if he had known us for years. All this was genuine feeling, a quick, luxuriant growth out of his heart, which was a soil for flower-seeds of rich and rare varieties, not acorns, but a true heart, nevertheless. Several years afterwards I met him for the last time at a London dinner-party, looking sadly broken down by infirmities; and my final recollec-

tion of the beautiful old man presents him arm in arm with, nay, if I mistake not, partly embraced and supported by, another beloved and honored poet, whose minstrel-name, since he has a week-day one for his personal occasions, I will venture to speak. It was Barry Cornwall, whose kind introduction had first made me known to Leigh Hunt.[1]

[1] Barry Cornwall, Mr. Procter, called on me a week or more ago, but I happened not to be in the office. Saturday last he called again, and as I had crossed to Rock Park he followed me thither. A plain, middle-sized, English-looking gentleman, elderly, with short white hair, and particularly quiet in his manners. He talks in a somewhat low tone without emphasis, scarcely distinct. . . . His head has a good outline, and would look well in marble. I liked him very well. He talked unaffectedly, showing an author's regard to his reputation, and was evidently pleased to hear of his American celebrity. He said that in his younger days he was a scientific pugilist, and once took a journey to have a sparring encounter with the Game-Chicken. Certainly no one would have looked for a pugilist in this subdued old gentleman. He is now Commissioner of Lunacy, and makes periodical circuits through the country, attending to the business of his office. He is slightly deaf, and this may be the cause of his unaccented utterance, — owing to his not being able to regulate his voice exactly by his own ear. . . . He is a good man, and much better expressed by his real name, Procter, than by his poetical one, Barry Cornwall. . . . He took my hand in both of his at parting. . . . — I. 498.

XI.

OUTSIDE GLIMPSES OF ENGLISH POVERTY

BECOMING an inhabitant of a great English town, I often turned aside from the prosperous thoroughfares (where the edifices, the shops, and the bustling crowd differed not so much from scenes with which I was familiar in my own country), and went designedly astray among precincts that reminded me of some of Dickens's grimiest pages. There I caught glimpses of a people and a mode of life that were comparatively new to my observation, a sort of sombre phantasmagoric spectacle, exceedingly undelightful to behold, yet involving a singular interest and even fascination in its ugliness.

Dirt, one would fancy, is plenty enough all over the world, being the symbolic accompaniment of the foul incrustation which began to settle over and bedim all earthly things as soon as Eve had bitten the apple; ever since which hapless epoch, her daugh-

ters have chiefly been engaged in a desperate and unavailing struggle to get rid of it. But the dirt of a poverty-stricken English street is a monstrosity unknown on our side of the Atlantic. It reigns supreme within its own limits, and is inconceivable everywhere beyond them. We enjoy the great advantage, that the brightness and dryness of our atmosphere keep everything clean that the sun shines upon, converting the larger portion of our impurities into transitory dust which the next wind can sweep away, in contrast with the damp, adhesive grime that incorporates itself with all surfaces (unless continually and painfully cleansed) in the chill moisture of the English air. Then the all-pervading smoke of the city, abundantly intermingled with the sable snow-flakes of bituminous coal, hovering overhead, descending, and alighting on pavements and rich architectural fronts, on the snowy muslin of the ladies, and the gentlemen's starched collars and shirt-bosoms, invests even the better streets in a half-mourning garb. It is beyond the resources of Wealth to keep the smut away from its premises or its own fingers' ends; and as for Poverty, it surrenders itself to the dark influence without a struggle.

Along with disastrous circumstances, pinching need, adversity so lengthened out as to constitute the rule of life, there comes a certain chill depression of the spirits which seems especially to shudder at cold water. In view of so wretched a state of things, we accept the ancient Deluge not merely as an insulated phenomenon, but as a periodical necessity, and acknowledge that nothing less than such a general washing-day could suffice to cleanse the slovenly old world of its moral and material dirt.

Gin-shops, or what the English call spirit-vaults, are numerous in the vicinity of these poor streets, and are set off with the magnificence of gilded door-posts, tarnished by contact with the unclean customers who haunt there. Ragged children come thither with old shaving-mugs, or broken-nosed teapots, or any such makeshift receptacle, to get a little poison or madness for their parents, who deserve no better requital at their hands for having engendered them. Inconceivably sluttish women enter at noonday and stand at the counter among boon-companions of both sexes, stirring up misery and jollity in a bumper together, and quaffing off the mixture with a relish. As for the men, they

lounge there continually, drinking till they are drunken, — drinking as long as they have a halfpenny left, — and then, as it seemed to me, waiting for a sixpenny miracle to be wrought in their pockets so as to enable them to be drunken again. Most of these establishments have a significant advertisement of "Beds," doubtless for the accommodation of their customers in the interval between one intoxication and the next. I never could find it in my heart, however, utterly to condemn these sad revelers, and should certainly wait till I had some better consolation to offer before depriving them of their dram of gin, though death itself were in the glass; for methought their poor souls needed such fiery stimulant to lift them a little way out of the smothering squalor of both their outward and interior life, giving them glimpses and suggestions, even if bewildering ones, of a spiritual existence that limited their present misery. The temperance-reformers unquestionably derive their commission from the Divine Beneficence, but have never been taken fully into its counsels. All may not be lost, though those good men fail.

Pawnbrokers' establishments — distin-

guished by the mystic symbol of the three golden balls, — were conveniently accessible; though what personal property these wretched people could possess, capable of being estimated in silver or copper, so as to afford a basis for a loan, was a problem that still perplexes me. Old clothesmen, likewise, dwelt hard by, and hung out ancient garments to dangle in the wind. There were butchers' shops, too, of a class adapted to the neighborhood, presenting no such generously fattened carcasses as Englishmen love to gaze at in the market, no stupendous halves of mighty beeves, no dead hogs, or muttons ornamented with carved bas-reliefs of fat on their ribs and shoulders, in a peculiarly British style of art, — not these, but bits and gobbets of lean meat, selvages snipt off from steaks, tough and stringy morsels, bare bones smitten away from joints by the cleaver; tripe, liver, bullocks' feet, or whatever else was cheapest and divisible into the smallest lots. I am afraid that even such delicacies came to many of their tables hardly oftener than Christmas. In the windows of other little shops you saw half a dozen wizened herrings; some eggs in a basket, looking so dingily antique that your imagi-

nation smelt them; fly-speckled biscuits, segments of a hungry cheese, pipes and papers of tobacco. Now and then a sturdy milk-woman passed by with a wooden yoke over her shoulders, supporting a pail on either side, filled with a whitish fluid, the composition of which was water and chalk and the milk of a sickly cow, who gave the best she had, poor thing! but could scarcely make it rich or wholesome, spending her life in some close city-nook and pasturing on strange food. I have seen, once or twice, a donkey coming into one of these streets with panniers full of vegetables, and departing with a return cargo of what looked like rubbish and street-sweepings. No other commerce seemed to exist, except, possibly, a girl might offer you a pair of stockings or a worked collar, or a man whisper something mysterious about wonderfully cheap cigars. And yet I remember seeing female hucksters in those regions, with their wares on the edge of the sidewalk and their own seats right in the carriage-way, pretending to sell half-decayed oranges and apples, toffy, Ormskirk cakes, combs, and cheap jewelry, the coarsest kind of crockery, and little plates of oysters, — knitting patiently all day long,

and removing their undiminished stock in trade at nightfall. All indispensable importations from other quarters of the town were on a remarkably diminutive scale: for example, the wealthier inhabitants purchased their coal by the wheelbarrow-load, and the poorer ones by the peck-measure. It was a curious and melancholy spectacle, when an overladen coal-cart happened to pass through the street and drop a handful or two of its burden in the mud, to see half a dozen women and children scrambling for the treasure-trove, like a flock of hens and chickens gobbling up some spilt corn. In this connection I may as well mention a commodity of boiled snails (for such they appeared to me, though probably a marine production) which used to be peddled from door to door, piping hot, as an article of cheap nutriment.

The population of these dismal abodes appeared to consider the sidewalks and middle of the street as their common hall. In a drama of low life, the unity of place might be arranged rigidly according to the classic rule, and the street be the one locality in which every scene and incident should occur. Courtship, quarrels, plot and counterplot, conspiracies for robbery

and murder, family difficulties or agreements, — all such matters, I doubt not, are constantly discussed or transacted in this sky-roofed saloon, so regally hung with its sombre canopy of coal-smoke. Whatever the disadvantages of the English climate, the only comfortable or wholesome part of life, for the city poor, must be spent in the open air. The stifled and squalid rooms where they lie down at night, whole families and neighborhoods together, or sulkily elbow one another in the daytime, when a settled rain drives them within doors, are worse horrors than it is worth while (without a practical object in view) to admit into one's imagination. No wonder that they creep forth from the foul mystery of their interiors, stumble down from their garrets, or scramble up out of their cellars, on the upper step of which you may see the grimy housewife, before the shower is ended, letting the raindrops gutter down her visage; while her children (an impish progeny of cavernous recesses below the common sphere of humanity) swarm into the daylight and attain all that they know of personal purification in the nearest mud-puddle. It might almost make a man doubt the existence of his own soul, to

observe how Nature has flung these little wretches into the street and left them there, so evidently regarding them as nothing worth, and how all mankind acquiesce in the great mother's estimate of her offspring. For, if they are to have no immortality, what superior claim can I assert for mine? And how difficult to believe that anything so precious as a germ of immortal growth can have been buried under this dirt-heap, plunged into this cesspool of misery and vice! As often as I beheld the scene, it affected me with surprise and loathsome interest, much resembling, though in a far intenser degree, the feeling with which, when a boy, I used to turn over a plank or an old log that had long lain on the damp ground, and found a vivacious multitude of unclean and devilish-looking insects scampering to and fro beneath it. Without an infinite faith, there seemed as much prospect of a blessed futurity for those hideous bugs and many-footed worms as for these brethren of our humanity and co-heirs of all our heavenly inheritance. Ah, what a mystery! Slowly, slowly, as after groping at the bottom of a deep, noisome, stagnant pool, my hope struggles upward to the surface, bearing

the half-drowned body of a child along with it, and heaving it aloft for its life, and my own life, and all our lives. Unless these slime-clogged nostrils can be made capable of inhaling celestial air, I know not how the purest and most intellectual of us can reasonably expect ever to taste a breath of it. The whole question of eternity is staked there. If a single one of those helpless little ones be lost, the world is lost!

The women and children greatly preponderate in such places; the men probably wandering abroad in quest of that daily miracle, a dinner and a drink, or perhaps slumbering in the daylight that they may the better follow out their cat-like rambles through the dark. Here are women with young figures, but old, wrinkled, yellow faces, tanned and blear-eyed with the smoke which they cannot spare from their scanty fires, — it being too precious for its warmth to be swallowed by the chimney. Some of them sit on the doorsteps, nursing their unwashed babies at bosoms which we will glance aside from, for the sake of our mothers and all womanhood, because the fairest spectacle is here the foulest. Yet motherhood, in these dark abodes, is

strangely identical with what we have all known it to be in the happiest homes. Nothing, as I remember, smote me with more grief and pity (all the more poignant because perplexingly entangled with an inclination to smile) than to hear a gaunt and ragged mother priding herself on the pretty ways of her ragged and skinny infant, just as a young matron might, when she invites her lady friends to admire her plump, white-robed darling in the nursery. Indeed, no womanly characteristic seemed to have altogether perished out of these poor souls. It was the very same creature whose tender torments make the rapture of our young days, whom we love, cherish, and protect, and rely upon in life and death, and whom we delight to see beautify her beauty with rich robes and set it off with jewels, though now fantastically masquerading in a garb of tatters, wholly unfit for her to handle. I recognized her, over and over again, in the groups round a doorstep or in the descent of a cellar, chatting with prodigious earnestness about intangible trifles, laughing for a little jest, sympathizing at almost the same instant with one neighbor's sunshine and another's shadow; wise, simple, sly, and patient, yet

easily perturbed, and breaking into small feminine ebullitions of spite, wrath, and jealousy, tornadoes of a moment, such as vary the social atmosphere of her silken-skirted sisters, though smothered into propriety by dint of a well-bred habit. Not that there was an absolute deficiency of good-breeding, even here. It often surprised me to witness a courtesy and deference among these ragged folks, which, having seen it, I did not thoroughly believe in, wondering whence it should have come. I am persuaded, however, that there were laws of intercourse which they never violated, — a code of the cellar, the garret, the common staircase, the doorstep, and the pavement, which, perhaps, had as deep a foundation in natural fitness as the code of the drawing-room.

Yet again I doubt whether I may not have been uttering folly in the last two sentences, when I reflect how rude and rough these specimens of feminine character generally were. They had a readiness with their hands that reminded me of Molly Seagrim and other heroines in Fielding's novels. For example, I have seen a woman meet a man in the street, and, for no reason perceptible to me, suddenly

clutch him by the hair and cuff his ears,— an infliction which he bore with exemplary patience, only snatching the very earliest opportunity to take to his heels. Where a sharp tongue will not serve the purpose, they trust to the sharpness of their finger-nails, or incarnate a whole vocabulary of vituperative words in a resounding slap, or the downright blow of a doubled fist. All English people, I imagine, are influenced in a far greater degree than ourselves by this simple and honest tendency, in cases of disagreement, to batter one another's persons ; and whoever has seen a crowd of English ladies (for instance, at the door of the Sistine Chapel, in Holy Week) will be satisfied that their belligerent propensities are kept in abeyance only by a merciless rigor on the part of society. It requires a vast deal of refinement to spiritualize their large physical endowments. Such being the case with the delicate ornaments of the drawing-room, it is less to be wondered at that women who live mostly in the open air, amid the coarsest kind of companionship and occupation, should carry on the intercourse of life with a freedom unknown to any class of American females, though still, I am resolved to think, compatible

with a generous breadth of natural propriety. It shocked me, at first, to see them (of all ages, even elderly, as well as infants that could just toddle across the street alone) going about in the mud and mire, or through the dusky snow and slosh of a severe week in winter, with petticoats high uplifted above bare, red feet and legs; but I was comforted by observing that both shoes and stockings generally reappeared with better weather, having been thriftily kept out of the damp for the convenience of dry feet within doors. Their hardihood was wonderful, and their strength greater than could have been expected from such spare diet as they probably lived upon. I have seen them carrying on their heads great burdens under which they walked as freely as if they were fashionable bonnets; or sometimes the burden was huge enough almost to cover the whole person, looked at from behind,—as in Tuscan villages you may see the girls coming in from the country with great bundles of green twigs upon their backs, so that they resemble locomotive masses of verdure and fragrance. But these poor English women seemed to be laden with rubbish, incongruous and indescribable, such as bones and rags, the

sweepings of the house and of the street, a merchandise gathered up from what poverty itself had thrown away, a heap of filthy stuff analogous to Christian's bundle of sin.

Sometimes, though very seldom, I detected a certain gracefulness among the younger women that was altogether new to my observation. It was a charm proper to the lowest class. One girl I particularly remember, in a garb none of the cleanest and nowise smart, and herself exceedingly coarse in all respects, but yet endowed with a sort of witchery, a native charm, a robe of simple beauty and suitable behavior that she was born in and had never been tempted to throw off, because she had really nothing else to put on. Eve herself could not have been more natural. Nothing was affected, nothing imitated; no proper grace was vulgarized by an effort to assume the manners or adornments of another sphere. This kind of beauty, arrayed in a fitness of its own, is probably vanishing out of the world, and will certainly never be found in America, where all the girls, whether daughters of the uppertendom, the mediocrity, the cottage, or the kennel, aim at one standard of dress and

deportment, seldom accomplishing a perfectly triumphant hit or an utterly absurd failure. Those words, "genteel" and "ladylike," are terrible ones, and do us infinite mischief, but it is because (at least, I hope so) we are in a transition state, and shall emerge into a higher mode of simplicity than has ever been known to past ages.

In such disastrous circumstances as I have been attempting to describe, it was beautiful to observe what a mysterious efficacy still asserted itself in character. A woman, evidently poor as the poorest of her neighbors, would be knitting or sewing on the doorstep, just as fifty other women were; but round about her skirts (though wofully patched) you would be sensible of a certain sphere of decency, which, it seemed to me, could not have been kept more impregnable in the cosiest little sitting-room, where the teakettle on the hob was humming its good old song of domestic peace. Maidenhood had a similar power. The evil habit that grows upon us in this harsh world makes me faithless to my own better perceptions; and yet I have seen girls in these wretched streets, on whose virgin purity, judging merely from their impression on my instincts as they passed

by, I should have deemed it safe, at the moment, to stake my life. The next moment, however, as the surrounding flood of moral uncleanness surged over their footsteps, I would not have staked a spike of thistle-down on the same wager. Yet the miracle was within the scope of Providence, which is equally wise and equally beneficent (even to those poor girls, though I acknowledge the fact without the remotest comprehension of the mode of it), whether they were pure or what we fellow-sinners call vile. Unless your faith be deep-rooted and of most vigorous growth, it is the safer way not to turn aside into this region so suggestive of miserable doubt. It was a place "with dreadful faces thronged," wrinkled and grim with vice and wretchedness; and, thinking over the line of Milton here quoted, I come to the conclusion that those ugly lineaments which startled Adam and Eve, as they looked backward to the closed gate of Paradise, were no fiends from the pit, but the more terrible foreshadowings of what so many of their descendants were to be. God help them, and us likewise, their brethren and sisters! Let me add, that, forlorn, ragged, careworn, hopeless, dirty, haggard, hungry, as they

were, the most pitiful thing of all was to see the sort of patience with which they accepted their lot, as if they had been born into the world for that and nothing else. Even the little children had this characteristic in as perfect development as their grandmothers.

The children, in truth, were the ill-omened blossoms from which another harvest of precisely such dark fruitage as I saw ripened around me was to be produced. Of course you would imagine these to be lumps of crude iniquity, tiny vessels as full as they could hold of naughtiness; nor can I say a great deal to the contrary. Small proof of parental discipline could I discern, save when a mother (drunken, I sincerely hope) snatched her own imp out of a group of pale, half-naked, humor-eaten abortions that were playing and squabbling together in the mud, turned up its tatters, brought down her heavy hand on its poor little tenderest part, and let it go again with a shake. If the child knew what the punishment was for, it was wiser than I pretend to be. It yelled and went back to its playmates in the mud. Yet let me bear testimony to what was beautiful, and more touching than anything that I ever wit-

nessed before in the intercourse of happier children. I allude to the superintendence which some of these small people (too small, one would think, to be sent into the street alone, had there been any other nursery for them) exercised over still smaller ones. Whence they derived such a sense of duty, unless immediately from God, I cannot tell; but it was wonderful to observe the expression of responsibility in their deportment, the anxious fidelity with which they discharged their unfit office, the tender patience with which they linked their less pliable impulses to the wayward footsteps of an infant, and let it guide them whithersoever it liked. In the hollow-cheeked, large-eyed girl of ten, whom I saw giving a cheerless oversight to her baby-brother, I did not so much marvel at it. She had merely come a little earlier than usual to the perception of what was to be her business in life. But I admired the sickly-looking little boy, who did violence to his boyish nature by making himself the servant of his little sister, — she too small to walk, and he too small to take her in his arms, — and therefore working a kind of miracle to transport her from one dirt-heap to another. Beholding such works of love

and duty, I took heart again, and deemed it not so impossible, after all, for these neglected children to find a path through the squalor and evil of their circumstances up to the gate of heaven. Perhaps there was this latent good in all of them, though generally they looked brutish, and dull even in their sports; there was little mirth among them, nor even a fully awakened spirit of blackguardism. Yet sometimes, again, I saw, with surprise and a sense as if I had been asleep and dreaming, the bright, intelligent, merry face of a child whose dark eyes gleamed with vivacious expression through the dirt that incrusted its skin, like sunshine struggling through a very dusty window-pane.

In these streets the belted and blue-coated policeman appears seldom in comparison with the frequency of his occurrence in more reputable thoroughfares. I used to think that the inhabitants would have ample time to murder one another, or any stranger, like myself, who might violate the filthy sanctities of the place, before the law could bring up its lumbering assistance. Nevertheless, there is a supervision; nor does the watchfulness of authority permit the populace to be tempted to

any outbreak. Once, in a time of dearth, I noticed a ballad-singer going through the street hoarsely chanting some discordant strain in a provincial dialect, of which I could only make out that it addressed the sensibilities of the auditors on the score of starvation; but by his side stalked the policeman, offering no interference, but watchful to hear what this rough minstrel said or sang, and silence him, if his effusion threatened to prove too soul-stirring. In my judgment, however, there is little or no danger of that kind: they starve patiently, sicken patiently, die patiently, not through resignation, but a diseased flaccidity of hope. If ever they should do mischief to those above them, it will probably be by the communication of some destructive pestilence; for, so the medical men affirm, they suffer all the ordinary diseases with a degree of virulence elsewhere unknown, and keep among themselves traditionary plagues that have long ceased to afflict more fortunate societies. Charity herself gathers her robe about her to avoid their contact. It would be a dire revenge, indeed, if they were to prove their claims to be reckoned of one blood and nature with the noblest and wealthiest, by compelling

them to inhale death through the diffusion of their own poverty-poisoned atmosphere.

A true Englishman is a kind man at heart, but has an unconquerable dislike to poverty and beggary. Beggars have heretofore been so strange to an American that he is apt to become their prey, being recognized through his national peculiarities, and beset by them in the streets. The English smile at him, and say that there are ample public arrangements for every pauper's possible need, that street charity promotes idleness and vice, and that yonder personification of misery on the pavement will lay up a good day's profit, besides supping more luxuriously than the dupe who gives him a shilling. By and by the stranger adopts their theory and begins to practice upon it, much to his own temporary freedom from annoyance, but not entirely without moral detriment or sometimes a too late contrition. Years afterwards, it may be, his memory is still haunted by some vindictive wretch whose cheeks were pale and hunger-pinched, whose rags fluttered in the east-wind, whose right arm was paralyzed and his left leg shriveled into a mere nerveless stick, but whom he passed by remorselessly be-

cause an Englishman chose to say that the fellow's misery looked too perfect, was too artistically got up, to be genuine. Even allowing this to be true (as, a hundred chances to one, it was), it would still have been a clear case of economy to buy him off with a little loose silver, so that his lamentable figure should not limp at the heels of your conscience all over the world.[1] To own the truth, I provided myself with several such imaginary persecutors in England, and recruited their number with at least one sickly-looking wretch whose acquaintance I first made at Assisi, in Italy, and, taking a dislike to something sinister in his aspect, permitted him to beg early and late, and all day long, without getting a single baiocco. At my latest glimpse of him, the villain avenged himself, not by a volley of horrible curses as any other Italian beggar would, but by taking an expression so grief-stricken, want-wrung, hopeless, and withal resigned, that I could paint his lifelike portrait at this moment. Were I to go over the same ground again, I would

[1] The natural man cries out against the philosophy that rejects beggars. It is a thousand to one that they are impostors, but yet we do ourselves a wrong by hardening our hearts against them. — II. 152.

listen to no man's theories, but buy the little luxury of beneficence at a cheap rate, instead of doing myself a moral mischief by exuding a stony incrustation over whatever natural sensibility I might possess.

On the other hand, there were some mendicants whose utmost efforts I even now felicitate myself on having withstood. Such was a phenomenon abridged of his lower half, who beset me for two or three years together, and, in spite of his deficiency of locomotive members, had some supernatural method of transporting himself (simultaneously, I believe) to all quarters of the city. He wore a sailor's jacket (possibly, because skirts would have been a superfluity to his figure), and had a remarkably broad-shouldered and muscular frame, surmounted by a large, fresh-colored face, which was full of power and intelligence. His dress and linen were the perfection of neatness. Once a day, at least, wherever I went, I suddenly became aware of this trunk of a man on the path before me, resting on his base, and looking as if he had just sprouted out of the pavement, and would sink into it again and reappear at some other spot the instant you left him behind. The expression of his eye was

perfectly respectful, but terribly fixed, holding your own as by fascination, never once winking, never wavering from its point-blank gaze right into your face, till you were completely beyond the range of his battery of one immense rifled cannon. This was his mode of soliciting alms; and he reminded me of the old beggar who appealed so touchingly to the charitable sympathies of Gil Blas, taking aim at him from the roadside with a long-barreled musket. The intentness and directness of his silent appeal, his close and unrelenting attack upon your individuality, respectful as it seemed, was the very flower of insolence; or, if you give it a possibly truer interpretation, it was the tyrannical effort of a man endowed with great natural force of character to constrain your reluctant will to his purpose. Apparently, he had staked his salvation upon the ultimate success of a daily struggle between himself and me, the triumph of which would compel me to become a tributary to the hat that lay on the pavement beside him. Man or fiend, however, there was a stubbornness in his intended victim which this massive fragment of a mighty personality had not altogether reckoned upon, and by its aid I

was enabled to pass him at my customary pace hundreds of times over, quietly meeting his terribly respectful eye, and allowing him the fair chance which I felt to be his due, to subjugate me, if he really had the strength for it. He never succeeded, but, on the other hand, never gave up the contest; and should I ever walk those streets again, I am certain that the truncated tyrant will sprout up through the pavement and look me fixedly in the eye, and perhaps get the victory.[1]

I should think all the more highly of myself, if I had shown equal heroism in

[1] Among the beggars of Liverpool, the hardest to encounter is a man without any legs, and if I mistake not, likewise deficient in arms. You see him before you all at once, as if he had sprouted half-way out of the earth, and would sink down and reappear in some other place the moment he has done with you. His countenance is large, fresh, and very intelligent; but his great power lies in his fixed gaze, which is inconceivably difficult to bear. He never once removes his eye from you till you are quite past his range; and you feel it all the same, although you do not meet his glance. He is perfectly respectful; but the intentness and directness of his silent appeal is far worse than any impudence. In fact, it is the very flower of impudence. I would rather go a mile about than pass before his battery. I feel wronged by him, and yet unutterably ashamed. There must be great force in the man to produce such an effect. There is nothing of the customary squalidness of beggary about him, but remarkable trimness and cleanliness. — I. 475.

resisting another class of beggarly depredators, who assailed me on my weaker side and won an easy spoil. Such was the sanctimonious clergyman, with his white cravat, who visited me with a subscription-paper, which he himself had drawn up, in a case of heart-rending distress; — the respectable and ruined tradesman, going from door to door, shy and silent in his own person, but accompanied by a sympathizing friend, who bore testimony to his integrity, and stated the unavoidable misfortunes that had crushed him down;[1] — or the delicate

[1] It appears to be customary for people of decent station, but in distressed circumstances, to go round among their neighbors and the public, accompanied by a friend, who explains the case. I have been accosted in the street in regard to one of these matters; and to-day there came to my office a grocer, who had become security for a friend, and who was threatened with an execution, — with another grocer for supporter and advocate. The beneficiary takes very little active part in the affair, merely looking careworn, distressed, and pitiable, and throwing in a word of corroboration, or a sigh, or an acknowledgment, as the case may demand. . . . The whole matter is very foreign to American habits. No respectable American would think of retrieving his affairs by such means, but would prefer ruin ten times over; no friend would take up his cause; no public would think it worth while to prevent the small catastrophe. And yet the custom is not without its good side, as indicating a closer feeling of brotherhood, a more efficient sense of neighborhood, than exists among ourselves, although,

and prettily dressed lady, who had been bred in affluence, but was suddenly thrown upon the perilous charities of the world by the death of an indulgent, but secretly insolvent father, or the commercial catastrophe and simultaneous suicide of the best of husbands; — or the gifted, but unsuccessful author, appealing to my fraternal sympathies, generously rejoicing in some small prosperities which he was kind enough to term my own triumphs in the field of letters, and claiming to have largely contributed to them by his unbought notices in the public journals. England is full of such people, and a hundred other varieties of peripatetic tricksters, higher than these, and lower, who act their parts tolerably well, but seldom with an absolutely illusive effect. I knew at once, raw Yankee as I was, that they were humbugs, almost without an exception, — rats that nibble at the honest bread and cheese of the community, and grow fat by their petty pilferings, — yet often gave them what they asked, and privately owned myself a simpleton. There is a decorum which re-

perhaps, we are more careless of a fellow-creature's ruin, because ruin with us is by no means the fatal and irretrievable event that it is in England. — I. 543.

strains you (unless you happen to be a police-constable) from breaking through a crust of plausible respectability, even when you are certain that there is a knave beneath it.

After making myself as familiar as I decently could with the poor streets, I became curious to see what kind of a home was provided for the inhabitants at the public expense, fearing that it must needs be a most comfortless one, or else their choice (if choice it were) of so miserable a life outside was truly difficult to account for. Accordingly, I visited a great almshouse, and was glad to observe how unexceptionably all the parts of the establishment were carried on, and what an orderly life, full-fed, sufficiently reposeful, and undisturbed by the arbitrary exercise of authority, seemed to be led there. Possibly, indeed, it was that very orderliness, and the cruel necessity of being neat and clean, and even the comfort resulting from these and other Christian-like restraints and regulations, that constituted the principal grievance on the part of the poor, shiftless inmates, accustomed to a life-long luxury of dirt and harum-scarumness. The wild life of the streets has perhaps as unforget-

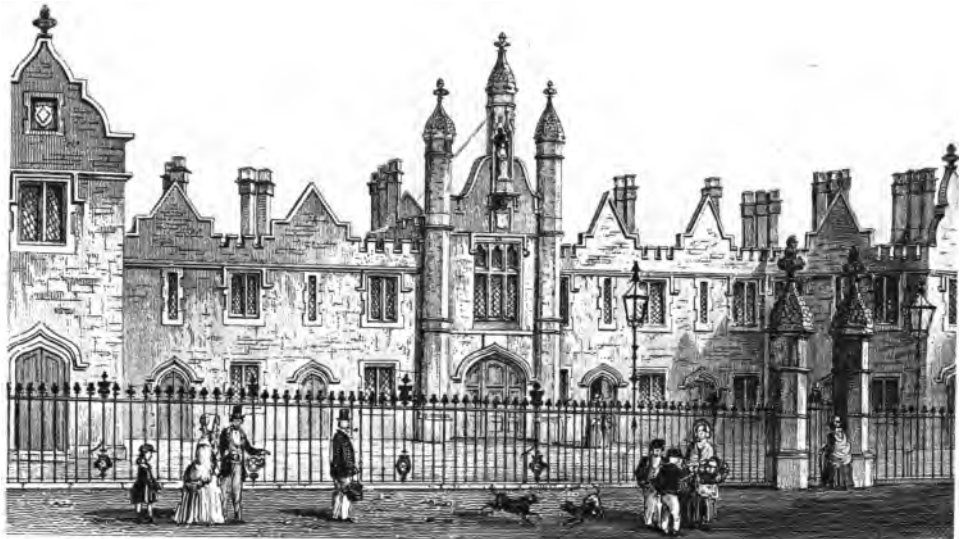
able a charm, to those who have once thoroughly imbibed it, as the life of the forest or the prairie. But I conceive rather that there must be insuperable difficulties, for the majority of the poor, in the way of getting admittance to the almshouse, than that a merely æsthetic preference for the street would incline the pauper class to fare scantily and precariously, and expose their raggedness to the rain and snow, when such a hospitable door stood wide open for their entrance. It might be that the roughest and darkest side of the matter was not shown me, there being persons of eminent station and of both sexes in the party which I accompanied; and, of course, a properly trained public functionary would have deemed it a monstrous rudeness, as well as a great shame, to exhibit anything to people of rank that might too painfully shock their sensibilities.

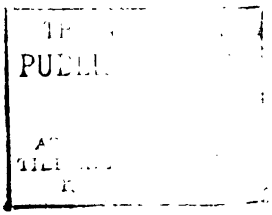
The women's ward was the portion of the establishment which we especially examined. It could not be questioned that they were treated with kindness as well as care. No doubt, as has been already suggested, some of them felt the irksomeness of submission to general rules of orderly behavior, after being accustomed to that

perfect freedom from the minor proprieties, at least, which is one of the compensations of absolutely hopeless poverty, or of any circumstances that set us fairly below the decencies of life. I asked the governor of the house whether he met with any difficulty in keeping peace and order among his inmates; and he informed me that his troubles among the women were incomparably greater than with the men. They were freakish, and apt to be quarrelsome, inclined to plague and pester one another in ways that it was impossible to lay hold of, and to thwart his own authority by the like intangible methods. He said this with the utmost good-nature, and quite won my regard by so placidly resigning himself to the inevitable necessity of letting the women throw dust into his eyes. They certainly looked peaceable and sisterly enough as I saw them, though still it might be faintly perceptible that some of them were consciously playing their parts before the governor and his distinguished visitors.

This governor seemed to me a man thoroughly fit for his position. An American, in an office of similar responsibility, would doubtless be a much superior person, better educated, possessing a far wider range of

An English Almshouse





thought, more naturally acute, with a quicker tact of external observation and a readier faculty of dealing with difficult cases. The women would not succeed in throwing half so much dust into his eyes. Moreover, his black coat, and thin, sallow visage, would make him look like a scholar, and his manners would indefinitely approximate to those of a gentleman. But I cannot help questioning whether, on the whole, these higher endowments would produce decidedly better results. The Englishman was thoroughly plebeian both in aspect and behavior, a bluff, ruddy-faced, hearty, kindly, yeoman-like personage, with no refinement whatever, nor any superfluous sensibility, but gifted with a native wholesomeness of character which must have been a very beneficial element in the atmosphere of the almshouse. He spoke to his pauper family in loud, good-humored, cheerful tones, and treated them with a healthy freedom that probably caused the forlorn wretches to feel as if they were free and healthy likewise. If he had understood them a little better, he would not have treated them half so wisely. We are apt to make sickly people more morbid, and unfortunate people more miserable, by

endeavoring to adapt our deportment to their especial and individual needs. They eagerly accept our well-meant efforts; but it is like returning their own sick breath back upon themselves, to be breathed over and over again, intensifying the inward mischief at every reception. The sympathy that would really do them good is of a kind that recognizes their sound and healthy parts, and ignores the part affected by disease, which will thrive under the eye of a too close observer like a poisonous weed in the sunshine. My good friend the governor had no tendencies in the latter direction, and abundance of them in the former, and was consequently as wholesome and invigorating as the west-wind with a little spice of the north in it, brightening the dreary visages that encountered us as if he had carried a sunbeam in his hand. He expressed himself by his whole being and personality, and by works more than words, and had the not unusual English merit of knowing what to do much better than how to talk about it.

The women, I imagine, must have felt one imperfection in their state, however comfortable otherwise. They were forbidden, or at all events lacked the means, to

follow out their natural instinct of adorning themselves; all were well dressed in one homely uniform of blue-checked gowns, with such caps upon their heads as English servants wear. Generally, too, they had one dowdy English aspect, and a vulgar type of features so nearly alike that they seemed literally to constitute a sisterhood. We have few of these absolutely unilluminated faces among our native American population, individuals of whom must be singularly unfortunate, if, mixing as we do, no drop of gentle blood has contributed to refine the turbid element, no gleam of hereditary intelligence has lighted up the stolid eyes, which their forefathers brought from the Old Country. Even in this English almshouse, however, there was at least one person who claimed to be intimately connected with rank and wealth. The governor, after suggesting that this person would probably be gratified by our visit, ushered us into a small parlor, which was furnished a little more like a room in a private dwelling than others that we entered, and had a row of religious books and fashionable novels on the mantelpiece. An old lady sat at a bright coal-fire, reading a romance, and rose to receive us with a

certain pomp of manner and elaborate display of ceremonious courtesy, which, in spite of myself, made me inwardly question the genuineness of her aristocratic pretensions. But, at any rate, she looked like a respectable old soul, and was evidently gladdened to the very core of her frost-bitten heart by the awful punctiliousness with which we responded to her gracious and hospitable, though unfamiliar welcome. After a little polite conversation, we retired; and the governor, with a lowered voice and an air of deference, told us that she had been a lady of quality, and had ridden in her own equipage, not many years before, and now lived in continual expectation that some of her rich relatives would drive up in their carriages to take her away. Meanwhile, he added, she was treated with great respect by her fellow-paupers. I could not help thinking, from a few criticisable peculiarities in her talk and manner, that there might have been a mistake on the governor's part, and perhaps a venial exaggeration on the old lady's, concerning her former position in society; but what struck me was the forcible instance of that most prevalent of English vanities, the pretension to aristocratic con-

nection, on one side, and the submission and reverence with which it was accepted by the governor and his household, on the other. Among ourselves, I think, when wealth and eminent position have taken their departure, they seldom leave a pallid ghost behind them, — or, if it sometimes stalks abroad, few recognize it.

We went into several other rooms, at the doors of which, pausing on the outside, we could hear the volubility, and sometimes the wrangling, of the female inhabitants within, but invariably found silence and peace when we stepped over the threshold. The women were grouped together in their sitting-rooms, sometimes three or four, sometimes a larger number, classified by their spontaneous affinities, I suppose, and all busied, so far as I can remember, with the one occupation of knitting coarse yarn stockings. Hardly any of them, I am sorry to say, had a brisk or cheerful air, though it often stirred them up to a momentary vivacity to be accosted by the governor, and they seemed to like being noticed, however slightly, by the visitors. The happiest person whom I saw there (and running hastily through my experiences, I hardly recollect to have seen a happier one

in my life, if you take a careless flow of spirits as happiness) was an old woman that lay in bed among ten or twelve heavy-looking females, who plied their knitting-work round about her. She laughed, when we entered, and immediately began to talk to us, in a thin, little, spirited quaver, claiming to be more than a century old; and the governor (in whatever way he happened to be cognizant of the fact) confirmed her age to be a hundred and four. Her jauntiness and cackling merriment were really wonderful. It was as if she had got through with all her actual business in life two or three generations ago, and now, freed from every responsibility for herself or others, had only to keep up a mirthful state of mind till the short time, or long time (and, happy as she was, she appeared not to care whether it were long or short), before Death, who had misplaced her name in his list, might remember to take her away. She had gone quite round the circle of human existence, and come back to the play-ground again. And so she had grown to be a kind of miraculous old pet, the plaything of people seventy or eighty years younger than herself, who talked and laughed with her as if she were a child,

finding great delight in her wayward and strangely playful responses, into some of which she cunningly conveyed a gibe that caused their ears to tingle a little. She had done getting out of bed in this world, and lay there to be waited upon like a queen or a baby.

In the same room sat a pauper who had once been an actress of considerable repute, but was compelled to give up her profession by a softening of the brain. The disease seemed to have stolen the continuity out of her life, and disturbed all healthy relationship between the thoughts within her and the world without. On our first entrance, she looked cheerfully at us, and showed herself ready to engage in conversation; but suddenly, while we were talking with the century-old crone, the poor actress began to weep, contorting her face with extravagant stage-grimaces, and wringing her hands for some inscrutable sorrow. It might have been a reminiscence of actual calamity in her past life, or, quite as probably, it was but a dramatic woe, beneath which she had staggered and shrieked and wrung her hands with hundreds of repetitions in the sight of crowded theatres, and been as often comforted by thun-

ders of applause. But my idea of the mystery was, that she had a sense of wrong in seeing the aged woman (whose empty vivacity was like the rattling of dry peas in a bladder) chosen as the central object of interest to the visitors, while she herself, who had agitated thousands of hearts with a breath, sat starving for the admiration that was her natural food. I appeal to the whole society of artists of the Beautiful and the Imaginative, — poets, romancers, painters, sculptors, actors, — whether or no this is a grief that may be felt even amid the torpor of a dissolving brain!

We looked into a good many sleeping-chambers, where were rows of beds, mostly calculated for two occupants, and provided with sheets and pillow-cases that resembled sackcloth. It appeared to me that the sense of beauty was insufficiently regarded in all the arrangements of the almshouse; a little cheap luxury for the eye, at least, might do the poor folks a substantial good. But, at all events, there was the beauty of perfect neatness and orderliness, which, being heretofore known to few of them, was perhaps as much as they could well digest in the remnant of their lives. We were invited into the laundry, where a

great washing and drying were in process, the whole atmosphere being hot and vaporous with the steam of wet garments and bedclothes. This atmosphere was the pauper-life of the past week or fortnight resolved into a gaseous state, and breathing it, however fastidiously, we were forced to inhale the strange element into our inmost being. Had the Queen been there, I know not how she could have escaped the necessity. What an intimate brotherhood is this in which we dwell, do what we may to put an artificial remoteness between the high creature and the low one! A poor man's breath, borne on the vehicle of tobacco-smoke, floats into a palace-window and reaches the nostrils of a monarch. It is but an example, obvious to the sense, of the innumerable and secret channels by which, at every moment of our lives, the flow and reflux of a common humanity pervade us all. How superficial are the niceties of such as pretend to keep aloof! Let the whole world be cleansed, or not a man or woman of us all can be clean.

By and by we came to the ward where the children were kept, on entering which, we saw, in the first place, several unlovely and unwholesome little people lazily play-

ing together in a court-yard. And here a singular incommodity befell one member of our party. Among the children was a wretched, pale, half-torpid little thing (about six years old, perhaps, but I know not whether a girl or a boy), with a humor in its eyes and face, which the governor said was the scurvy, and which appeared to bedim its powers of vision, so that it toddled about gropingly, as if in quest of it did not precisely know what. This child — this sickly, wretched, humor-eaten infant, the offspring of unspeakable sin and sorrow, whom it must have required several generations of guilty progenitors to render so pitiable an object as we beheld it — immediately took an unaccountable fancy to the gentleman just hinted at. It prowled about him like a pet kitten, rubbing against his legs, following everywhere at his heels, pulling at his coat-tails, and, at last, exerting all the speed that its poor limbs were capable of, got directly before him and held forth its arms, mutely insisting on being taken up. It said not a word, being perhaps underwitted and incapable of prattle. But it smiled up in his face, — a sort of woful gleam was that smile, through the sickly blotches that covered its features, —

and found means to express such a perfect confidence that it was going to be fondled and made much of, that there was no possibility in a human heart of balking its expectation. It was as if God had promised the poor child this favor on behalf of that individual, and he was bound to fulfill the contract, or else no longer call himself a man among men. Nevertheless, it could be no easy thing for him to do, he being a person burdened with more than an Englishman's customary reserve, shy of actual contact with human beings, afflicted with a peculiar distaste for whatever was ugly, and, furthermore, accustomed to that habit of observation from an insulated standpoint which is said (but, I hope, erroneously) to have the tendency of putting ice into the blood.

So I watched the struggle in his mind with a good deal of interest, and am seriously of opinion that he did an heroic act, and effected more than he dreamed of towards his final salvation, when he took up the loathsome child and caressed it as tenderly as if he had been its father. To be sure, we all smiled at him, at the time, but doubtless would have acted pretty much the same in a similar stress of circum-

stances. The child, at any rate, appeared to be satisfied with his behavior; for when he had held it a considerable time, and set it down, it still favored him with its company, keeping fast hold of his forefinger till we reached the confines of the place. And on our return through the court-yard, after visiting another part of the establishment, here again was this same little Wretchedness waiting for its victim, with a smile of joyful, and yet dull recognition about its scabby mouth and in its rheumy eyes. No doubt, the child's mission in reference to our friend was to remind him that he was responsible, in his degree, for all the sufferings and misdemeanors of the world in which he lived, and was not entitled to look upon a particle of its dark calamity as if it were none of his concern: the offspring of a brother's iniquity being his own blood-relation, and the guilt, likewise, a burden on him, unless he expiated it by better deeds.[1]

[1] *February* 28, 1856. "After this, we went to the ward [West Derby Workhouse] where the children were kept, and, on entering this, we saw, in the first place, two or three unlovely and unwholesome little imps, who were lazily playing together. One of them (a child about six years old, but I know not whether girl or boy) immediately took the strangest fancy for me. It was a wretched,

All the children in this ward seemed to be invalids, and, going upstairs, we found more of them in the same or a worse condition than the little creature just described, with their mothers (or more probably other women, for the infants were mostly foundlings) in attendance as nurses. The matron of the ward, a middle-aged woman, remarkably kind and motherly in aspect, was walking to and fro across the

pale, half-torpid little thing, with a humor in its eyes which the governor said was the scurvy. I never saw, till a few moments afterwards, a child that I should feel less inclined to fondle. But this little, sickly, humor-eaten fright prowled around me, taking hold of my skirts, following at my heels, and at last held up its hands, smiled in my face, and, standing directly before me, insisted on my taking it up! Not that it said a word, for I rather think it was undei witted, and could not talk; but its face expressed such perfect confidence that it was going to be taken up and made much of, that it was impossible not to do it. It was as if God had promised the child this favor on my behalf, and that I must needs fulfill the contract. I held my undesirable burden a little while; and, after setting the child down, it still followed me, holding two of my fingers and playing with them, just as if it were a child of my own. It was a foundling, and out of all human kind it chose me to be its father! We went up stairs into another ward; and, on coming down again, there was this same child waiting for me, with a sickly smile round its defaced mouth, and in its dim red eyes. . . . I never should have forgiven myself if I had repelled its advances."— II. 184.

chamber — on that weary journey in which careful mothers and nurses travel so continually and so far, and gain never a step of progress — with an unquiet baby in her arms. She assured us that she enjoyed her occupation, being exceedingly fond of children; and, in fact, the absence of timidity in all the little people was a sufficient proof that they could have had no experience of harsh treatment, though, on the other hand, none of them appeared to be attracted to one individual more than another. In this point they differed widely from the poor child below stairs. They seemed to recognize a universal motherhood in womankind, and cared not which individual might be the mother of the moment. I found their tameness as shocking as did Alexander Selkirk that of the brute subjects of his else solitary kingdom. It was a sort of tame familiarity, a perfect indifference to the approach of strangers, such as I never noticed in other children. I accounted for it partly by their nerveless, unstrung state of body, incapable of the quick thrills of delight and fear which play upon the lively harp-strings of a healthy child's nature, and partly by their woful lack of acquaintance with a private home,

and their being therefore destitute of the sweet home-bred shyness, which is like the sanctity of heaven about a mother-petted child. Their condition was like that of chickens hatched in an oven, and growing up without the especial guardianship of a matron hen: both the chicken and the child, methinks, must needs want something that is essential to their respective characters.

In this chamber (which was spacious, containing a large number of beds) there was a clear fire burning on the hearth, as in all the other occupied rooms; and directly in front of the blaze sat a woman holding a baby, which, beyond all reach of comparison, was the most horrible object that ever afflicted my sight. Days afterwards — nay, even now, when I bring it up vividly before my mind's eye — it seemed to lie upon the floor of my heart, polluting my moral being with the sense of something grievously amiss in the entire conditions of humanity. The holiest man could not be otherwise than full of wickedness, the chastest virgin seemed impure, in a world where such a babe was possible. The governor whispered me, apart, that, like nearly all the rest of them, it was

the child of unhealthy parents. Ah, yes! There was the mischief. This spectral infant, a hideous mockery of the visible link which Love creates between man and woman, was born of disease and sin. Diseased Sin was its father, and Sinful Disease its mother, and their offspring lay in the woman's arms like a nursing Pestilence, which, could it live and grow up, would make the world a more accursed abode than ever heretofore. Thank Heaven, it could not live! This baby, if we must give it that sweet name, seemed to be three or four months old, but, being such an unthrifty changeling, might have been considerably older. It was all covered with blotches, and preternaturally dark and discolored; it was withered away, quite shrunken and fleshless; it breathed only amid pantings and gaspings, and moaned painfully at every gasp. The only comfort in reference to it was the evident impossibility of its surviving to draw many more of those miserable, moaning breaths; and it would have been infinitely less heart-depressing to see it die, right before my eyes, than to depart and carry it alive in my remembrance, still suffering the incalculable torture of its little life. I can by

no means express how horrible this infant was, neither ought I to attempt it. And yet I must add one final touch. Young as the poor little creature was, its pain and misery had endowed it with a premature intelligence, insomuch that its eyes seemed to stare at the by-standers out of their sunken sockets knowingly and appealingly, as if summoning us one and all to witness the deadly wrong of its existence. At least, I so interpreted its look, when it positively met and responded to my own awe-stricken gaze, and therefore I lay the case, as far as I am able, before mankind, on whom God has imposed the necessity to suffer in soul and body till this dark and dreadful wrong be righted.

Thence we went to the school-rooms, which were underneath the chapel. The pupils, like the children whom we had just seen, were, in large proportion, foundlings. Almost without exception, they looked sickly, with marks of eruptive trouble in their doltish faces, and a general tendency to diseases of the eye. Moreover, the poor little wretches appeared to be uneasy within their skins, and screwed themselves about on the benches in a disagreeably suggestive way, as if they had inherited

the evil habits of their parents as an innermost garment of the same texture and material as the shirt of Nessus, and must wear it with unspeakable discomfort as long as they lived. I saw only a single child that looked healthy; and on my pointing him out, the governor informed me that this little boy, the sole exception to the miserable aspect of his school-fellows, was not a foundling, nor properly a workhouse child, being born of respectable parentage, and his father one of the officers of the institution. As for the remainder, — the hundred pale abortions to be counted against one rosy-cheeked boy, — what shall we say or do? Depressed by the sight of so much misery, and uninventive of remedies for the evils that force themselves on my perception, I can do little more than recur to the idea already hinted at in the early part of this article, regarding the speedy necessity of a new deluge. So far as these children are concerned, at any rate, it would be a blessing to the human race, which they will contribute to enervate and corrupt, — a greater blessing to themselves, who inherit no patrimony but disease and vice, and in whose souls, if there be a spark of God's life, this seems

the only possible mode of keeping it aglow, — if every one of them could be drowned to-night, by their best friends, instead of being put tenderly to bed. This heroic method of treating human maladies, moral and material, is certainly beyond the scope of man's discretionary rights, and probably will not be adopted by Divine Providence until the opportunity of milder reformation shall have been offered us again and again, through a series of future ages.

It may be fair to acknowledge that the humane and excellent governor, as well as other persons better acquainted with the subject than myself, took a less gloomy view of it, though still so dark a one as to involve scanty consolation. They remarked that individuals of the male sex, picked up in the streets and nurtured in the workhouse, sometimes succeed tolerably well in life, because they are taught trades before being turned into the world, and, by dint of immaculate behavior and good luck, are not unlikely to get employment and earn a livelihood. The case is different with the girls. They can only go to service, and are invariably rejected by families of respectability on account of their origin, and for the better reason of their unfitness to

fill satisfactorily even the meanest situations in a well-ordered English household. Their resource is to take service with people only a step or two above the poorest class, with whom they fare scantily, endure harsh treatment, lead shifting and precarious lives, and finally drop into the slough of evil, through which, in their best estate, they do but pick their slimy way on stepping-stones.

From the schools we went to the bake-house, and the brew-house (for such cruelty is not harbored in the heart of a true Englishman as to deny a pauper his daily allowance of beer), and through the kitchens, where we beheld an immense pot over the fire, surging and walloping with some kind of a savory stew that filled it up to its brim. We also visited a tailor's shop, and a shoemaker's shop, in both of which a number of men, and pale, diminutive apprentices, were at work, diligently enough, though seemingly with small heart in the business. Finally, the governor ushered us into a shed, inside of which was piled up an immense quantity of new coffins. They were of the plainest description, made of pine boards, probably of American growth, not very nicely smoothed by

the plane, neither painted nor stained with black, but provided with a loop of rope at either end for the convenience of lifting the rude box and its inmate into the cart that shall carry them to the burial-ground. There, in holes ten feet deep, the paupers are buried one above another, mingling their relics indistinguishably. In another world may they resume their individuality, and find it a happier one than here!

As we departed, a character came under our notice which I have met with in all almshouses, whether of the city or village, or in England or America. It was the familiar simpleton, who shuffled across the court-yard, clattering his wooden-soled shoes, to greet us with a howl or a laugh, I hardly know which, holding out his hand for a penny, and chuckling grossly when it was given him. All underwitted persons, so far as my experience goes, have this craving for copper coin, and appear to estimate its value by a miraculous instinct, which is one of the earliest gleams of human intelligence while the nobler faculties are yet in abeyance. There may come a time, even in this world, when we shall all understand that our tendency to the individual appropriation of gold and broad

acres, fine houses, and such good and beautiful things as are equally enjoyable by a multitude, is but a trait of imperfectly developed intelligence, like the simpleton's cupidity of a penny. When that day dawns, — and probably not till then, — I imagine that there will be no more poor streets nor need of almshouses.

I was once present at the wedding of some poor English people, and was deeply impressed by the spectacle, though by no means with such proud and delightful emotions as seem to have affected all England on the recent occasion of the marriage of its Prince. It was in the Cathedral at Manchester, a particularly black and grim old structure, into which I had stepped to examine some ancient and curious wood-carvings within the choir. The woman in attendance greeted me with a smile (which always glimmers forth on the feminine visage, I know not why, when a wedding is in question), and asked me to take a seat in the nave till some poor parties were married, it being the Easter holidays, and a good time for them to marry, because no fees would be demanded by the clergyman. I sat down accordingly, and soon the parson and his clerk appeared at the altar, and

a considerable crowd of people made their entrance at a side-door, and ranged themselves in a long, huddled line across the chancel. They were my acquaintances of the poor streets, or persons in a precisely similar condition of life, and were now come to their marriage-ceremony in just such garbs as I had always seen them wear: the men in their loafers' coats, out at elbows, or their laborers' jackets, defaced with grimy toil; the women drawing their shabby shawls tighter about their shoulders, to hide the raggedness beneath; all of them unbrushed, unshaven, unwashed, uncombed, and wrinkled with penury and care; nothing virgin-like in the brides, nor hopeful or energetic in the bridegrooms; — they were, in short, the mere rags and tatters of the human race, whom some east-wind of evil omen, howling along the streets, had chanced to sweep together into an unfragrant heap. Each and all of them, conscious of his or her individual misery, had blundered into the strange miscalculation of supposing that they could lessen the sum of it by multiplying it into the misery of another person. All the couples (and it was difficult, in such a confused crowd, to compute exactly their number)

stood up at once, and had execution done upon them in the lump, the clergyman addressing only small parts of the service to each individual pair, but so managing the larger portion as to include the whole company without the trouble of repetition. By this compendious contrivance, one would apprehend, he came dangerously near making every man and woman the husband or wife of every other; nor, perhaps, would he have perpetrated much additional mischief by the mistake; but, after receiving a benediction in common, they assorted themselves in their own fashion, as they only knew how, and departed to the garrets, or the cellars, or the unsheltered street-corners, where their honeymoon and subsequent lives were to be spent. The parson smiled decorously, the clerk and the sexton grinned broadly, the female attendant tittered almost aloud, and even the married parties seemed to see something exceedingly funny in the affair; but for my part, though generally apt enough to be tickled by a joke, I laid it away in my memory as one of the saddest sights I ever looked upon.

Not very long afterwards, I happened to be passing the same venerable cathedral,

and heard a clang of joyful bells, and beheld a bridal party coming down the steps towards a carriage and four horses, with a portly coachman and two postilions, that waited at the gate. One parson and one service had amalgamated the wretchedness of a score of paupers; a Bishop and three or four clergymen had combined their spiritual might to forge the golden links of this other marriage-bond. The bridegroom's mien had a sort of careless and kindly English pride; the bride floated along in her white drapery, a creature so nice and delicate that it was a luxury to see her, and a pity that her silk slippers should touch anything so grimy as the old stones of the churchyard avenue. The crowd of ragged people, who always cluster to witness what they may of an aristocratic wedding, broke into audible admiration of the bride's beauty and the bridegroom's manliness, and uttered prayers and ejaculations (possibly paid for in alms) for the happiness of both. If the most favorable of earthly conditions could make them happy, they had every prospect of it. They were going to live on their abundance in one of those stately and delightful English homes, such as no other people ever cre-

ated or inherited, a hall set far and safe within its own private grounds, and surrounded with venerable trees, shaven lawns, rich shrubbery, and trimmest pathways, the whole so artfully contrived and tended that summer rendered it a paradise, and even winter would hardly disrobe it of its beauty; and all this fair property seemed more exclusively and inalienably their own, because of its descent through many forefathers, each of whom had added an improvement or a charm, and thus transmitted it with a stronger stamp of rightful possession to his heir. And is it possible, after all, that there may be a flaw in the title-deeds? Is, or is not, the system wrong that gives one married pair so immense a superfluity of luxurious home, and shuts out a million others from any home whatever? One day or another, safe as they deem themselves, and safe as the hereditary temper of the people really tends to make them, the gentlemen of England will be compelled to face this question.

XII.

CIVIC BANQUETS

It has often perplexed me to imagine how an Englishman will be able to reconcile himself to any future state of existence from which the earthly institution of dinner shall be excluded. Even if he fail to take his appetite along with him (which it seems to me hardly possible to believe, since this endowment is so essential to his composition), the immortal day must still admit an interim of two or three hours during which he will be conscious of a slight distaste, at all events, if not an absolute repugnance, to merely spiritual nutriment. The idea of dinner has so imbedded itself among his highest and deepest characteristics, so illuminated itself with intellect and softened itself with the kindest emotions of his heart, so linked itself with Church and State, and grown so majestic with long hereditary customs and ceremonies, that, by taking it utterly away, Death, instead of putting the final touch

to his perfection, would leave him infinitely less complete than we have already known him. He could not be roundly happy. Paradise, among all its enjoyments, would lack one daily felicity which his sombre little island possessed. Perhaps it is not irreverent to conjecture that a provision may have been made, in this particular, for the Englishman's exceptional necessities. It strikes me that Milton was of the opinion here suggested, and may have intended to throw out a delightful and consolatory hope for his countrymen, when he represents the genial archangel as playing his part with such excellent appetite at Adam's dinner-table, and confining himself to fruit and vegetables only, because, in those early days of her housekeeping, Eve had no more acceptable viands to set before him. Milton, indeed, had a true English taste for the pleasures of the table, though refined by the lofty and poetic discipline to which he had subjected himself. It is delicately implied in the refection in Paradise, and more substantially, though still elegantly, betrayed in the sonnet proposing to "Laurence, of virtuous father virtuous son," a series of nice little dinners in midwinter; and it blazes fully out in that

untasted banquet, which, elaborate as it was, Satan tossed up in a trice from the kitchen-ranges of Tartarus.

Among this people, indeed, so wise in their generation, dinner has a kind of sanctity quite independent of the dishes that may be set upon the table; so that, if it be only a mutton-chop, they treat it with due reverence, and are rewarded with a degree of enjoyment which such reckless devourers as ourselves do not often find in our richest abundance. It is good to see how stanch they are after fifty or sixty years of heroic eating, still relying upon their digestive powers and indulging a vigorous appetite; whereas an American has generally lost the one and learned to distrust the other long before reaching the earliest decline of life; and thenceforward he makes little account of his dinner, and dines at his peril, if at all. I know not whether my countrymen will allow me to tell them, though I think it scarcely too much to affirm, that on this side of the water people never dine. At any rate, abundantly as Nature has provided us with most of the material requisites, the highest possible dinner has never yet been eaten in America. It is the consummate flower of civil-

ization and refinement; and our inability to produce it, or to appreciate its admirable beauty if a happy inspiration should bring it into bloom, marks fatally the limit of culture which we have attained.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the mob of cultivated Englishmen know how to dine in this elevated sense. The unpolishable ruggedness of the national character is still an impediment to them, even in that particular line where they are best qualified to excel. Though often present at good men's feasts, I remember only a single dinner, which, while lamentably conscious that many of its higher excellences were thrown away upon me, I yet could feel to be a perfect work of art. It could not, without unpardonable coarseness, be styled a matter of animal enjoyment, because, out of the very perfection of that lower bliss, there had arisen a dream-like development of spiritual happiness. As in the masterpieces of painting and poetry, there was a something intangible, a final deliciousness that only fluttered about your comprehension, vanishing whenever you tried to detain it, and compelling you to recognize it by faith rather than sense. It seemed as if a diviner set of senses were

requisite, and had been partly supplied, for the special fruition of this banquet, and that the guests around the table (only eight in number) were becoming so educated, polished, and softened, by the delicate influences of what they ate and drank, as to be now a little more than mortal for the nonce. And there was that gentle, delicious sadness, too, which we find in the very summit of our most exquisite enjoyments, and feel it a charm beyond all the gayety through which it keeps breathing its undertone. In the present case, it was worth a heavier sigh to reflect that such a festal achievement — the production of so much art, skill, fancy, invention, and perfect taste — the growth of all the ages, which appeared to have been ripening for this hour, since man first began to eat and to moisten his food with wine — must lavish its happiness upon so brief a moment when other beautiful things can be made a joy forever. Yet a dinner like this is no better than we can get, any day, at the rejuvenescent Cornhill Coffee-house, unless the whole man, with soul, intellect, and stomach, is ready to appreciate it, and unless, moreover, there is such a harmony in all the circumstances and accompani-

ments, and especially such a pitch of well-according minds, that nothing shall jar rudely against the guest's thoroughly awakened sensibilities. The world, and especially our part of it, being the rough, ill-assorted, and tumultuous place we find it, a beefsteak is about as good as any other dinner.

The foregoing reminiscence, however, has drawn me aside from the main object of my sketch, in which I purposed to give a slight idea of those public, or partially public banquets, the custom of which so thoroughly prevails among the English people, that nothing is ever decided upon, in matters of peace and war, until they have chewed upon it in the shape of roast-beef, and talked it fully over in their cups. Nor are these festivities merely occasional, but of stated recurrence in all considerable municipalities and associated bodies. The most ancient times appear to have been as familiar with them as the Englishmen of to-day. In many of the old English towns, you find some stately Gothic hall or chamber in which the Mayor and other authorities of the place have long held their sessions; and always, in convenient contiguity, there is a dusky kitchen, with an immense fire-

place where an ox might lie roasting at his ease, though the less gigantic scale of modern cookery may now have permitted the cobwebs to gather in its chimney. St. Mary's Hall, in Coventry, is so good a specimen of an ancient banqueting-room, that perhaps I may profitably devote a page or two to the description of it.

In a narrow street opposite to St. Michael's Church, one of the three famous spires of Coventry, you behold a mediæval edifice, in the basement of which is such a venerable and now deserted kitchen as I have above alluded to, and, on the same level, a cellar, with low stone pillars and intersecting arches, like the crypt of a cathedral. Passing up a well-worn staircase, the oaken balustrade of which is as black as ebony, you enter the fine old hall, some sixty feet in length, and broad and lofty in proportion. It is lighted by six windows of modern stained glass, on one side, and by the immense and magnificent arch of another window at the farther end of the room, its rich and ancient panes constituting a genuine historical piece, in which are represented some of the kingly personages of old times, with their heraldic blazonries. Notwithstanding the colored light

thus thrown into the hall, and though it was noonday when I last saw it, the paneling of black-oak, and some faded tapestry that hung round the walls, together with the cloudy vault of the roof above, made a gloom, which the richness only illuminated into more appreciable effect. The tapestry is wrought with figures in the dress of Henry VI.'s time (which is the date of the hall), and is regarded by antiquaries as authentic evidence both for the costume of that epoch, and, I believe, for the actual portraiture of men known in history. They are as colorless as ghosts, however, and vanish drearily into the old stitch-work of their substance when you try to make them out. Coats of arms were formerly emblazoned all round the hall, but have been almost rubbed out by people hanging their overcoats against them, or by women with dishclouts and scrubbing-brushes, obliterating hereditary glories in their blind hostility to dust and spiders' webs. Full-length portraits of several English kings, Charles II. being the earliest, hang on the walls; and on the dais, or elevated part of the floor, stands an antique chair of state, which several royal characters are traditionally said to have occupied while feast-

ing here with their loyal subjects of Coventry. It is roomy enough for a person of kingly bulk, or even two such, but angular and uncomfortable, reminding me of the oaken settles which used to be seen in old-fashioned New England kitchens.

Overhead, supported by a self-sustaining power, without the aid of a single pillar, is the original ceiling of oak, precisely similar in shape to the roof of a barn, with all the beams and rafters plainly to be seen. At the remote height of sixty feet, you hardly discern that they are carved with figures of angels, and doubtless many other devices, of which the admirable Gothic art is wasted in the duskiness that has so long been brooding there. Over the entrance of the hall, opposite the great arched window, the party-colored radiance of which glimmers faintly through the interval, is a gallery for minstrels; and a row of ancient suits of armor is suspended from its balustrade. It impresses me, too (for, having gone so far, I would fain leave nothing untouched upon), that I remember, somewhere about these venerable precincts, a picture of the Countess Godiva on horseback, in which the artist has been so niggardly of that illustrious lady's hair, that,

if she had no ampler garniture, there was certainly much need for the good people of Coventry to shut their eyes. After all my pains, I fear that I have made but a poor hand at the description, as regards a transference of the scene from my own mind to the reader's. It gave me a most vivid idea of antiquity that had been very little tampered with; insomuch that, if a group of steel-clad knights had come clanking through the doorway, and a bearded and beruffed old figure had handed in a stately dame, rustling in gorgeous robes of a long-forgotten fashion, unveiling a face of beauty somewhat tarnished in the mouldy tomb, yet stepping majestically to the trill of harp and viol from the minstrels' gallery, while the rusty armor responded with a hollow ringing sound beneath, — why, I should have felt that these shadows, once so familiar with the spot, had a better right in St. Mary's Hall than I, a stranger from a far country which has no Past. But the moral of the foregoing description is to show how tenaciously this love of pompous dinners, this reverence for dinner as a sacred institution, has caught hold of the English character; since, from the earliest recognizable period, we find them building

their civic banqueting-halls as magnificently as their palaces or cathedrals.

I know not whether the hall just described is now used for festive purposes, but others of similar antiquity and splendor still are. For example, there is Barber Surgeons' Hall, in London, a very fine old room, adorned with admirably carved wood-work on the ceiling and walls. It is also enriched with Holbein's masterpiece, representing a grave assemblage of barbers and surgeons, all portraits (with such extensive beards that methinks one half of the company might have been profitably occupied in trimming the other), kneeling before King Henry VIII. Sir Robert Peel is said to have offered a thousand pounds for the liberty of cutting out one of the heads from this picture, he conditioning to have a perfect facsimile painted in.[1] The

[1] In this room hangs the most valuable picture by Holbein now in existence, representing the company of Barber Surgeons kneeling before Henry VIII., and receiving their charter from his hands. The picture is about six feet square. The king is dressed in scarlet, and quite fulfills one's idea of his aspect. The Barber-Surgeons, all portraits, are an assemblage of grave-looking personages, in dark costumes. The company has refused five thousand pounds for this unique picture; and the keeper of the Hall told me that Sir Robert Peel had offered a thousand pounds for liberty to take out

room has many other pictures of distinguished members of the company in long-past times, and of some of the monarchs and statesmen of England, all darkened with age, but darkened into such ripe magnificence as only age could bestow. It is not my design to inflict any more specimens of ancient hall-painting on the reader; but it may be worth while to touch upon other modes of stateliness that still survive in these time-honored civic feasts, where there appears to be a singular assumption of dignity and solemn pomp by respectable citizens who would never dream of claiming any privilege of rank outside of their own sphere. Thus, I saw two caps of state for the warden and junior warden of the company, caps of silver (real coronets or crowns, indeed, for these city-grandees) wrought in open-work and lined with crimson velvet. In a strong-closet, opening from the hall, there was a great deal of rich plate to furnish forth the banquet-table, comprising hundreds of forks and spoons, a vast silver punch-bowl, the gift

only one of the heads, that of a person named Penn, he conditioning to have a perfect facsimile painted in. I did not see any merit in this head over the others. — II. 200.

of some jolly king or other, and, besides a multitude of less noticeable vessels, two loving-cups, very elaborately wrought in silver gilt, one presented by Henry VIII., the other by Charles II. These cups, including the covers and pedestals, are very large and weighty, although the bowl-part would hardly contain more than half a pint of wine, which, when the custom was first established, each guest was probably expected to drink off at a draught. In passing them from hand to hand adown a long table of compotators, there is a peculiar ceremony which I may hereafter have occasion to describe. Meanwhile, if I might assume such a liberty, I should be glad to invite the reader to the official dinner-table of his Worship, the Mayor, at a large English seaport where I spent several years.

The Mayor's dinner-parties occur as often as once a fortnight, and, inviting his guests by fifty or sixty at a time, his Worship probably assembles at his board most of the eminent citizens and distinguished personages of the town and neighborhood more than once during his year's incumbency, and very much, no doubt, to the promotion of good feeling among individuals of opposite parties and diverse pursuits

in life. A miscellaneous party of Englishmen can always find more comfortable ground to meet upon than as many Americans, their differences of opinion being incomparably less radical than ours, and it being the sincerest wish of all their hearts, whether they call themselves Liberals or what not, that nothing in this world shall ever be greatly altered from what it has been and is. Thus there is seldom such a virulence of political hostility that it may not be dissolved in a glass or two of wine, without making the good liquor any more dry or bitter than accords with English taste.

The first dinner of this kind at which I had the honor to be present took place during assize-time, and included among the guests the judges and the prominent members of the bar. Reaching the Town Hall at seven o'clock, I communicated my name to one of several splendidly dressed footmen, and he repeated it to another on the first staircase, by whom it was passed to a third, and thence to a fourth at the door of the reception-room, losing all resemblance to the original sound in the course of these transmissions; so that I had the advantage of making my entrance in the character of

a stranger, not only to the whole company, but to myself as well. His Worship, however, kindly recognized me, and put me on speaking-terms with two or three gentlemen, whom I found very affable, and all the more hospitably attentive on the score of my nationality. It is very singular how kind an Englishman will almost invariably be to an individual American, without ever bating a jot of his prejudice against the American character in the lump. My new acquaintances took evident pains to put me at my ease; and, in requital of their good-nature, I soon began to look round at the general company in a critical spirit, making my crude observations apart, and drawing silent inferences, of the correctness of which I should not have been half so well satisfied a year afterwards as at that moment.

There were two judges present, a good many lawyers, and a few officers of the army in uniform. The other guests seemed to be principally of the mercantile class, and among them was a ship-owner from Nova Scotia, with whom I coalesced a little, inasmuch as we were born with the same sky over our heads, and an unbroken continuity of soil between his abode and mine.

There was one old gentleman, whose character I never made out, with powdered hair, clad in black breeches and silk stockings, and wearing a rapier at his side; otherwise, with the exception of the military uniforms, there was little or no pretense of official costume. It being the first considerable assemblage of Englishmen that I had seen, my honest impression about them was that they were a heavy and homely set of people, with a remarkable roughness of aspect and behavior, not repulsive, but beneath which it required more familiarity with the national character than I then possessed always to detect the good breeding of a gentleman. Being generally middle-aged, or still further advanced, they were by no means graceful in figure; for the comeliness of the youthful Englishman rapidly diminishes with years, his body appearing to grow longer, his legs to abbreviate themselves, and his stomach to assume the dignified prominence which justly belongs to that metropolis of his system. His face (what with the acridity of the atmosphere, ale at lunch, wine at dinner, and a well-digested abundance of succulent food) gets red and mottled, and develops at least one additional chin, with a promise of more;

so that, finally, a stranger recognizes his animal part at the most superficial glance, but must take time and a little pains to discover the intellectual. Comparing him with an American, I really thought that our national paleness and lean habit of flesh gave us greatly the advantage in an æsthetic point of view. It seemed to me, moreover, that the English tailor had not done so much as he might and ought for these heavy figures, but had gone on willfully exaggerating their uncouthness by the roominess of their garments; he had evidently no idea of accuracy of fit, and smartness was entirely out of his line. But, to be quite open with the reader, I afterwards learned to think that this aforesaid tailor has a deeper art than his brethren among ourselves, knowing how to dress his customers with such individual propriety that they look as if they were born in their clothes, the fit being to the character rather than the form. If you make an Englishman smart (unless he be a very exceptional one, of whom I have seen a few), you make him a monster; his best aspect is that of ponderous respectability.

To make an end of these first impressions, I fancied that not merely the Suffolk

bar, but the bar of any inland county in New England, might show a set of thin-visaged men looking wretchedly worn, sallow, deeply wrinkled across the forehead, and grimly furrowed about the mouth, with whom these heavy-cheeked English lawyers, slow-paced and fat-witted as they must needs be, would stand very little chance in a professional contest. How that matter might turn out, I am unqualified to decide. But I state these results of my earliest glimpses at Englishmen, not for what they are worth, but because I ultimately gave them up as worth little or nothing. In course of time, I came to the conclusion that Englishmen of all ages are a rather good-looking people, dress in admirable taste from their own point of view, and, under a surface never silken to the touch, have a refinement of manners too thorough and genuine to be thought of as a separate endowment, — that is to say, if the individual himself be a man of station, and has had gentlemen for his father and grandfather. The sturdy Anglo-Saxon nature does not refine itself short of the third generation. The tradesmen, too, and all other classes, have their own proprieties.

The only value of my criticisms, there-

fore, lay in their exemplifying the proneness of a traveler to measure one people by the distinctive characteristics of another, — as English writers invariably measure us, and take upon themselves to be disgusted accordingly, instead of trying to find out some principle of beauty with which we may be in conformity.

In due time we were summoned to the table, and went thither in no solemn procession, but with a good deal of jostling, thrusting behind, and scrambling for places when we reached our destination. The legal gentlemen, I suspect, were responsible for this indecorous zeal, which I never afterwards remarked in a similar party. The dining-hall was of noble size, and, like the other rooms of the suite, was gorgeously painted and gilded and brilliantly illuminated. There was a splendid table-service, and a noble array of footmen, some of them in plain clothes, and others wearing the town-livery, richly decorated with gold-lace, and themselves excellent specimens of the blooming young manhood of Britain. When we were fairly seated, it was certainly an agreeable spectacle to look up and down the long vista of earnest faces, and behold them so resolute, so conscious

that there was an important business in hand, and so determined to be equal to the occasion. Indeed, Englishman or not, I hardly know what can be prettier than a snow-white tablecloth, a huge heap of flowers as a central decoration, bright silver, rich china, crystal glasses, decanters of Sherry at due intervals, a French roll and an artistically folded napkin at each plate, all that airy portion of a banquet, in short, that comes before the first mouthful, the whole illuminated by a blaze of artificial light, without which a dinner of made-dishes looks spectral, and the simplest viands are the best. Printed bills-of-fare were distributed, representing an abundant feast, no part of which appeared on the table until called for in separate plates. I have entirely forgotten what it was, but deem it no great matter, inasmuch as there is a pervading commonplace and identicalness in the composition of extensive dinners, on account of the impossibility of supplying a hundred guests with anything particularly delicate or rare. It was suggested to me that certain juicy old gentlemen had a private understanding what to call for, and that it would be good policy in a stranger to follow in their footsteps

through the feast. I did not care to do so, however, because, like Sancho Panza's dip out of Camacho's caldron, any sort of pot-luck at such a table would be sure to suit my purpose; so I chose a dish or two on my own judgment, and, getting through my labors betimes, had great pleasure in seeing the Englishmen toil onward to the end.

They drank rather copiously, too, though wisely; for I observed that they seldom took Hock, and let the Champagne bubble slowly away out of the goblet, solacing themselves with Sherry, but tasting it warily before bestowing their final confidence. Their taste in wines, however, did not seem so exquisite, and certainly was not so various, as that to which many Americans pretend. This foppery of an intimate acquaintance with rare vintages does not suit a sensible Englishman, as he is very much in earnest about his wines, and adopts one or two as his life-long friends, seldom exchanging them for any Delilahs of a moment, and reaping the reward of his constancy in an unimpaired stomach, and only so much gout as he deems wholesome and desirable. Knowing well the measure of his powers, he is

not apt to fill his glass too often. Society, indeed, would hardly tolerate habitual imprudences of that kind, though, in my opinion, the Englishmen now upon the stage could carry off their three bottles, at need, with as steady a gait as any of their forefathers. It is not so very long since the three-bottle heroes sank finally under the table. It may be (at least, I should be glad if it were true) that there was an occult sympathy between our temperance reform, now somewhat in abeyance, and the almost simultaneous disappearance of hard-drinking among the respectable classes in England. I remember a middle-aged gentleman telling me (in illustration of the very slight importance attached to breaches of temperance within the memory of men not yet old) that he had seen a certain magistrate, Sir John Linkwater, or Drinkwater, — but I think the jolly old knight could hardly have staggered under so perverse a misnomer as this last, — while sitting on the magisterial bench, pull out a crown-piece and hand it to the clerk. "Mr. Clerk," said Sir John, as if it were the most indifferent fact in the world, "I was drunk last night. There are my five shillings."

During the dinner, I had a good deal of pleasant conversation with the gentlemen on either side of me. One of them, a lawyer, expatiated with great unction on the social standing of the judges. Representing the dignity and authority of the Crown, they take precedence, during assize-time, of the highest military men in the kingdom, of the Lord Lieutenant of the county, of the Archbishops, of the royal Dukes, and even of the Prince of Wales. For the nonce, they are the greatest men in England. With a glow of professional complacency that amounted to enthusiasm, my friend assured me, that, in case of a royal dinner, a judge, if actually holding an assize, would be expected to offer his arm and take the Queen herself to the table. Happening to be in company with some of these elevated personages, on subsequent occasions, it appeared to me that the judges are fully conscious of their paramount claims to respect, and take rather more pains to impress them on their ceremonial inferiors than men of high hereditary rank are apt to do. Bishops, if it be not irreverent to say so, are sometimes marked by a similar characteristic. Dignified position is so sweet to an

Englishman, that he needs to be born in it, and to feel it thoroughly incorporated with his nature from its original germ, in order to keep him from flaunting it obtrusively in the faces of innocent by-standers.

My companion on the other side was a thick-set, middle-aged man, uncouth in manners, and ugly where none were handsome, with a dark, roughly hewn visage, that looked grim in repose, and seemed to hold within itself the machinery of a very terrific frown. He ate with resolute appetite, and let slip few opportunities of imbibing whatever liquids happened to be passing by. I was meditating in what way this grisly featured table-fellow might most safely be accosted, when he turned to me with a surly sort of kindness, and invited me to take a glass of wine. We then began a conversation that abounded, on his part, with sturdy sense, and, somehow or other, brought me closer to him than I had yet stood to an Englishman. I should hardly have taken him to be an educated man, certainly not a scholar of accurate training; and yet he seemed to have all the resources of education and trained intellectual power at command. My fresh Americanism, and watchful observation of

English characteristics, appeared either to interest or amuse him, or perhaps both. Under the mollifying influences of abundance of meat and drink, he grew very gracious (not that I ought to use such a phrase to describe his evidently genuine good-will), and by and by expressed a wish for further acquaintance, asking me to call at his rooms in London and inquire for Sergeant Wilkins, — throwing out the name forcibly, as if he had no occasion to be ashamed of it. I remembered Dean Swift's retort to Sergeant Bettesworth on a similar announcement, — "Of what regiment, pray, sir?" — and fancied that the same question might not have been quite amiss, if applied to the rugged individual at my side. But I heard of him subsequently as one of the prominent men at the English bar, a rough customer, and a terribly strong champion in criminal cases; and it caused me more regret than might have been expected, on so slight an acquaintanceship, when, not long afterwards, I saw his death announced in the newspapers. Not rich in attractive qualities, he possessed, I think, the most attractive one of all, — thorough manhood.

After the cloth was removed, a goodly group of decanters were set before the

Mayor, who sent them forth on their outward voyage, full freighted with Port, Sherry, Madeira, and Claret, of which excellent liquors, methought, the latter found least acceptance among the guests. When every man had filled his glass, his Worship stood up and proposed a toast. It was, of course, "Our gracious Sovereign," or words to that effect; and immediately a band of musicians, whose preliminary tootings and thrummings I had already heard behind me, struck up "God save the Queen!" and the whole company rose with one impulse to assist in singing that famous national anthem. It was the first time in my life that I had ever seen a body of men, or even a single man, under the active influence of the sentiment of Loyalty; for, though we call ourselves loyal to our country and institutions, and prove it by our readiness to shed blood and sacrifice life in their behalf, still the principle is as cold and hard, in an American bosom, as the steel spring that puts in motion a powerful machinery. In the Englishman's system, a force similar to that of our steel spring is generated by the warm throbbings of human hearts. He clothes our bare abstraction in flesh and blood, — at present,

in the flesh and blood of a woman, — and manages to combine love, awe, and intellectual reverence, all in one emotion, and to embody his mother, his wife, his children, the whole idea of kindred, in a single person, and make her the representative of his country and its laws. We Americans smile superior, as I did at the Mayor's table; and yet, I fancy, we lose some very agreeable titillations of the heart in consequence of our proud prerogative of caring no more about our President than for a man of straw, or a stuffed scarecrow straddling in a cornfield.

But, to say the truth, the spectacle struck me rather ludicrously, to see this party of stout middle-aged and elderly gentlemen, in the fullness of meat and drink, their ample and ruddy faces glistening with wine, perspiration, and enthusiasm, rumbling out those strange old stanzas from the very bottom of their hearts and stomachs, which two organs, in the English interior arrangement, lie closer together than in ours. The song seemed to me the rudest old ditty in the world; but I could not wonder at its universal acceptance and indestructible popularity, considering how inimitably it expresses the national faith and feeling

as regards the inevitable righteousness of England, the Almighty's consequent respect and partiality for that redoubtable little island, and his presumed readiness to strengthen its defense against the contumacious wickedness and knavery of all other principalities or republics. Tennyson himself, though evidently English to the very last prejudice, could not write half so good a song for the purpose. Finding that the entire dinner-table struck in, with voices of every pitch between rolling thunder and the squeak of a cart-wheel, and that the strain was not of such delicacy as to be much hurt by the harshest of them, I determined to lend my own assistance in swelling the triumphant roar. It seemed but a proper courtesy to the first Lady in the land, whose guest, in the largest sense, I might consider myself. Accordingly, my first tuneful efforts (and probably my last, for I purpose not to sing any more, unless it be "Hail Columbia" on the restoration of the Union) were poured freely forth in honor of Queen Victoria. The Sergeant smiled like the carved head of a Swiss nutcracker, and the other gentlemen in my neighborhood, by nods and gestures, evinced grave approbation of so suitable a

tribute to English superiority; and we finished our stave and sat down in an extremely happy frame of mind.

Other toasts followed in honor of the great institutions and interests of the country, and speeches in response to each were made by individuals whom the Mayor designated or the company called for. None of them impressed me with a very high idea of English postprandial oratory. It is inconceivable, indeed, what ragged and shapeless utterances most Englishmen are satisfied to give vent to, without attempting anything like artistic shape, but clapping on a patch here and another there, and ultimately getting out what they want to say, and generally with a result of sufficiently good sense, but in some such disorganized mass as if they had thrown it up rather than spoken it. It seemed to me that this was almost as much by choice as necessity. An Englishman, ambitious of public favor, should not be too smooth. If an orator is glib, his countrymen distrust him. They dislike smartness. The stronger and heavier his thoughts, the better, provided there be an element of commonplace running through them; and any rough, yet never vulgar, force of ex-

pression, such as would knock an opponent down if it hit him, only it must not be too personal, is altogether to their taste; but a studied neatness of language, or other such superficial graces, they cannot abide. They do not often permit a man to make himself a fine orator of malice aforethought, that is, unless he be a nobleman (as, for example, Lord Stanley, of the Derby family), who, as an hereditary legislator and necessarily a public speaker, is bound to remedy a poor natural delivery in the best way he can. On the whole, I partly agree with them, and, if I cared for any oratory whatever, should be as likely to applaud theirs as our own. When an English speaker sits down, you feel that you have been listening to a real man, and not to an actor; his sentiments have a wholesome earth-smell in them, though, very likely, this apparent naturalness is as much an art as what we expend in rounding a sentence or elaborating a peroration.

It is one good effect of this inartificial style, that nobody in England seems to feel any shyness about shoveling the untrimmed and untrimmable ideas out of his mind for the benefit of an audience. At least, nobody did on the occasion now in

hand, except a poor little Major of Artillery, who responded for the Army in a thin, quavering voice, with a terribly hesitating trickle of fragmentary ideas, and, I question not, would rather have been bayoneted in front of his batteries than to have said a word. Not his own mouth, but the cannon's, was this poor Major's proper organ of utterance.

While I was thus amiably occupied in criticising my fellow-guests, the Mayor had got up to propose another toast; and listening rather inattentively to the first sentence or two, I soon became sensible of a drift in his Worship's remarks that made me glance apprehensively towards Sergeant Wilkins. "Yes," grumbled that gruff personage, shoving a decanter of Port towards me, "it is your turn next;" and seeing in my face, I suppose, the consternation of a wholly unpracticed orator, he kindly added, "It is nothing. A mere acknowledgment will answer the purpose. The less you say, the better they will like it." That being the case, I suggested that perhaps they would like it best if I said nothing at all. But the Sergeant shook his head. Now, on first receiving the Mayor's invitation to dinner, it had occurred to me that

I might possibly be brought into my present predicament; but I had dismissed the idea from my mind as too disagreeable to be entertained, and, moreover, as so alien from my disposition and character that Fate surely could not keep such a misfortune in store for me. If nothing else prevented, an earthquake or the crack of doom would certainly interfere before I need rise to speak. Yet here was the Mayor getting on inexorably, — and, indeed, I heartily wished that he might get on and on forever, and of his wordy wanderings find no end.

If the gentle reader, my kindest friend and closest confidant, deigns to desire it, I can impart to him my own experience as a public speaker quite as indifferently as if it concerned another person. Indeed, it does concern another, or a mere spectral phenomenon, for it was not I, in my proper and natural self, that sat there at table or subsequently rose to speak. At the moment, then, if the choice had been offered me whether the Mayor should let off a speech at my head or a pistol, I should unhesitatingly have taken the latter alternative. I had really nothing to say, not an idea in my head, nor, which was a great

deal worse, any flowing words or embroidered sentences in which to dress out that empty Nothing, and give it a cunning aspect of intelligence, such as might last the poor vacuity the little time it had to live. But time pressed; the Mayor brought his remarks, affectionately eulogistic of the United States and highly complimentary to their distinguished representative at that table, to a close, amid a vast deal of cheering; and the band struck up "Hail Columbia," I believe, though it might have been "Old Hundred," or "God save the Queen" over again, for anything that I should have known or cared. When the music ceased, there was an intensely disagreeable instant, during which I seemed to rend away and fling off the habit of a lifetime, and rose, still void of ideas, but with preternatural composure, to make a speech. The guests rattled on the table, and cried, "Hear!" most vociferously, as if now, at length, in this foolish and idly garrulous world, had come the long-expected moment when one golden word was to be spoken; and in that imminent crisis, I caught a glimpse of a little bit of an effusion of international sentiment, which it might, and must, and should do to utter.

Well; it was nothing, as the Sergeant had said. What surprised me most was the sound of my own voice, which I had never before heard at declamatory pitch, and which impressed me as belonging to some other person, who, and not myself, would be responsible for the speech: a prodigious consolation and encouragement under the circumstances! I went on without the slightest embarrassment, and sat down amid great applause, wholly undeserved by anything that I had spoken, but well won from Englishmen, methought, by the new development of pluck that alone had enabled me to speak at all. "It was handsomely done!" quoth Sergeant Wilkins; and I felt like a recruit who had been for the first time under fire.[1]

I would gladly have ended my oratorical career then and there forever, but was often placed in a similar or worse position, and compelled to meet it as I best might;

[1] ...body may make an after-dinner speech who will ...it to talk onward without saying anything. My ...was not more than two or three inches long; ...sidering that I did not know a soul there, ex-... Mayor himself, and that I am wholly unprac-...n all sorts of oratory, and that I had nothing to ...it was quite successful. I hardly thought it was in ..., but, being once started, I felt no embarrassment, ...nd went through it as coolly as if I were going to be hanged. — I. 429.

for this was one of the necessities of an office which I had voluntarily taken on my shoulders, and beneath which I might be crushed by no moral delinquency on my own part, but could not shirk without cowardice and shame. My subsequent fortune was various. Once, though I felt it to be a kind of imposture, I got a speech by heart, and doubtless it might have been a very pretty one, only I forgot every syllable at the moment of need, and had to improvise another as well as I could. I found it a better method to prearrange a few points in my mind, and trust to the spur of the occasion, and the kind aid of Providence, for enabling me to bring them to bear. The presence of any considerable proportion of personal friends generally dumfounded me. I would rather have talked with an enemy in the gate. Invariably, too, I was much embarrassed by a small audience, and succeeded better with a large one, — the sympathy of a multitude possessing a buoyant effect, which lifts the speaker a little way out of his individuality, and tosses him towards a perhaps better range of sentiment than his private one. Again, if I rose carelessly and confidently, with an expectation of going

through the business entirely at my ease, I often found that I had little or nothing to say; whereas, if I came to the charge in perfect despair, and at a crisis when failure would have been horrible, it once or twice happened that the frightful emergency concentrated my poor faculties, and enabled me to give definite and vigorous expression to sentiments which an instant before looked as vague and far off as the clouds in the atmosphere. On the whole, poor as my own success may have been, I apprehend that any intelligent man with a tongue possesses the chief requisite of oratorical power, and may develop many of the others, if he deems it worth while to bestow a great amount of labor and pains on an object which the most accomplished orators, I suspect, have not found altogether satisfactory to their highest impulses. At any rate, it must be a remarkably true man who can keep his own elevated conception of truth when the lower feeling of a multitude is assailing his natural sympathies, and who can speak out frankly the best that there is in him, when by adulterating it a little, or a good deal, he knows that he may make it ten times as acceptable to the audience.

This slight article on the civic banquets of England would be too wretchedly imperfect without an attempted description of a Lord Mayor's dinner at the Mansion House in London. I should have preferred the annual feast at Guildhall, but never had the good fortune to witness it. Once, however, I was honored with an invitation to one of the regular dinners, and gladly accepted it, — taking the precaution, nevertheless, though it hardly seemed necessary, to inform the City-King, through a mutual friend, that I was no fit representative of American eloquence, and must humbly make it a condition that I should not be expected to open my mouth, except for the reception of his Lordship's bountiful hospitality. The reply was gracious and acquiescent; so that I presented myself in the great entrance-hall of the Mansion House, at half-past six o'clock, in a state of most enjoyable freedom from the pusillanimous apprehensions that often tormented me at such times. The Mansion House was built in Queen Anne's days, in the very heart of old London, and is a palace worthy of its inhabitant, were he really as great a man as his traditionary state and pomp would seem to indicate. Times are changed,

however, since the days of Whittington, or even of Hogarth's Industrious Apprentice, to whom the highest imaginable reward of lifelong integrity was a seat in the Lord Mayor's chair. People nowadays say that the real dignity and importance have perished out of the office, as they do, sooner or later, out of all earthly institutions, leaving only a painted and gilded shell like that of an Easter egg, and that it is only second-rate and third-rate men who now condescend to be ambitious of the Mayoralty. I felt a little grieved at this; for the original emigrants of New England had strong sympathies with the people of London, who were mostly Puritans in religion and Parliamentarians in politics, in the early days of our country; so that the Lord Mayor was a potentate of huge dimensions in the estimation of our forefathers, and held to be hardly second to the prime minister of the throne. The true great men of the city now appear to have aims beyond city greatness, connecting themselves with national politics, and seeking to be identified with the aristocracy of the country.

In the entrance-hall I was received by a body of footmen dressed in a livery of blue coats and buff breeches, in which

they looked wonderfully like American Revolutionary generals, only bedizened with far more lace and embroidery than those simple and grand old heroes ever dreamed of wearing. There were likewise two very imposing figures, whom I should have taken to be military men of rank, being arrayed in scarlet coats and large silver epaulets; but they turned out to be officers of the Lord Mayor's household, and were now employed in assigning to the guests the places which they were respectively to occupy at the dinner-table. Our names (for I had included myself in a little group of friends) were announced; and ascending the staircase, we met his Lordship in the doorway of the first reception-room, where, also, we had the advantage of a presentation to the Lady Mayoress. As this distinguished couple retired into private life at the termination of their year of office, it is inadmissible to make any remarks, critical or laudatory, on the manners and bearing of two personages suddenly emerging from a position of respectable mediocrity into one of preëminent dignity within their own sphere. Such individuals almost always seem to grow nearly or quite to the full size of their office. If it were

desirable to write an essay on the latent aptitude of ordinary people for grandeur, we have an exemplification in our own country, and on a scale incomparably greater than that of the Mayoralty, though invested with nothing like the outward magnificence that gilds and embroiders the latter. If I have been correctly informed, the Lord Mayor's salary is exactly double that of the President of the United States, and yet is found very inadequate to his necessary expenditure.

There were two reception-rooms, thrown into one by the opening of wide folding-doors; and though in an old style, and not yet so old as to be venerable, they are remarkably handsome apartments, lofty as well as spacious, with carved ceilings and walls, and at either end a splendid fireplace of white marble, ornamented with sculptured wreaths of flowers and foliage. The company were about three hundred, many of them celebrities in politics, war, literature, and science, though I recollect none preëminently distinguished in either department. But it is certainly a pleasant mode of doing honor to men of literature, for example, who deserve well of the public, yet do not often meet it face to face, thus

to bring them together under genial auspices, in connection with persons of note in other lines. I know not what may be the Lord Mayor's mode or principle of selecting his guests, nor whether, during his official term, he can proffer his hospitality to every man of noticeable talent in the wide world of London, nor, in fine, whether his Lordship's invitation is much sought for or valued; but it seemed to me that this periodical feast is one of the many sagacious methods which the English have contrived for keeping up a good understanding among different sorts of people. Like most other distinctions of society, however, I presume that the Lord Mayor's card does not often seek out modest merit, but comes at last when the recipient is conscious of the bore, and doubtful about the honor.

One very pleasant characteristic, which I never met with at any other public or partially public dinner, was the presence of ladies. No doubt, they were principally the wives and daughters of city magnates; and if we may judge from the many sly allusions in old plays and satirical poems, the city of London has always been famous for the beauty of its women and the re-

ciprocal attractions between them and the men of quality. Be that as it might, while straying hither and thither through those crowded apartments, I saw much reason for modifying certain heterodox opinions which I had imbibed, in my Transatlantic newness and rawness, as regarded the delicate character and frequent occurrence of English beauty. To state the entire truth (being, at this period, some years old in English life), my taste, I fear, had long since begun to be deteriorated by acquaintance with other models of feminine loveliness than it was my happiness to know in America. I often found, or seemed to find, if I may dare to confess it, in the persons of such of my dear countrywomen as I now occasionally met, a certain meagreness (Heaven forbid that I should call it scrawniness!), a deficiency of physical development, a scantiness, so to speak, in the pattern of their material make, a paleness of complexion, a thinness of voice, — all of which characteristics, nevertheless, only made me resolve so much the more sturdily to uphold these fair creatures as angels, because I was sometimes driven to a half-acknowledgment that the English ladies, looked at from a lower point of

view, were perhaps a little finer animals than they. The advantages of the latter, if any they could really be said to have, were all comprised in a few additional lumps of clay on their shoulders and other parts of their figures. It would be a pitiful bargain to give up the ethereal charm of American beauty in exchange for half a hundred-weight of human clay!

At a given signal we all found our way into an immense room, called the Egyptian Hall, I know not why, except that the architecture was classic, and as different as possible from the ponderous style of Memphis and the Pyramids. A powerful band played inspiringly as we entered, and a brilliant profusion of light shone down on two long tables, extending the whole length of the hall, and a cross-table between them, occupying nearly its entire breadth. Glass gleamed and silver glistened on an acre or two of snowy damask, over which were set out all the accompaniments of a stately feast. We found our places without much difficulty, and the Lord Mayor's chaplain implored a blessing on the food, — a ceremony which the English never omit, at a great dinner or a small one, yet consider, I fear, not so much

a religious rite as a sort of preliminary relish before the soup.

The soup, of course, on this occasion, was turtle, of which, in accordance with immemorial custom, each guest was allowed two platefuls, in spite of the otherwise immitigable law of table-decorum. Indeed, judging from the proceedings of the gentlemen near me, I surmised that there was no practical limit, except the appetite of the guests and the capacity of the soup-tureens. Not being fond of this civic dainty, I partook of it but once, and then only in accordance with the wise maxim, always to taste a fruit, a wine, or a celebrated dish, at its indigenous site; and the fountain-head of turtle-soup, I suppose, is in the Lord Mayor's dinner-pot. It is one of those orthodox customs which people follow for half a century without knowing why, to drink a sip of rum-punch, in a very small tumbler, after the soup. It was excellently well-brewed, and it seemed to me almost worth while to sup the soup for the sake of sipping the punch. The rest of the dinner was catalogued in a bill-of-fare printed on delicate white paper within an arabesque border of green and gold. It looked very good, not only in the English

and French names of the numerous dishes, but also in the positive reality of the dishes themselves, which were all set on the table to be carved and distributed by the guests. This ancient and honest method is attended with a good deal of trouble, and a lavish effusion of gravy, yet by no means bestowed or dispensed in vain, because you have thereby the absolute assurance of a banquet actually before your eyes, instead of a shadowy promise in the bill-of-fare, and such meagre fulfillment as a single guest can contrive to get upon his individual plate. I wonder that Englishmen, who are fond of looking at prize-oxen in the shape of butcher's meat, do not generally better estimate the æsthetic gormandism of devouring the whole dinner with their eyesight, before proceeding to nibble the comparatively few morsels which, after all, the most heroic appetite and widest stomachic capacity of mere mortals can enable even an alderman really to eat. There fell to my lot three delectable things enough, which I take pains to remember, that the reader may not go away wholly unsatisfied from the Barmecide feast to which I have bidden him, — a red mullet, a plate of mushrooms, exquisitely stewed, and part of

a ptarmigan, a bird of the same family as the grouse, but feeding high up towards the summit of the Scotch mountains, whence it gets a wild delicacy of flavor very superior to that of the artificially nurtured English game-fowl. All the other dainties have vanished from my memory as completely as those of Prospero's banquet after Ariel had clapped his wings over it. The band played at intervals inspiriting us to new efforts, as did likewise the sparkling wines which the footmen supplied from an inexhaustible cellar, and which the guests quaffed with little apparent reference to the disagreeable fact that there comes a to-morrow morning after every feast. As long as that shall be the case, a prudent man can never have full enjoyment of his dinner.

Nearly opposite to me, on the other side of the table, sat a young lady in white, whom I am sorely tempted to describe, but dare not, because not only the supereminence of her beauty, but its peculiar character, would cause the sketch to be recognized, however rudely it might be drawn. I hardly thought that there existed such a woman outside of a picture-frame, or the covers of a romance: not that I had

ever met with her resemblance even there, but, being so distinct and singular an apparition, she seemed likelier to find her sisterhood in poetry and picture than in real life. Let us turn away from her, lest a touch too apt should compel her stately and cold and soft and womanly grace to gleam out upon my page with a strange repulsion and unattainableness in the very spell that made her beautiful.[1] At her

[1] My eyes were mostly drawn to a young lady, who sat nearly opposite me, across the table. She was, I suppose, dark, and yet not dark, but rather seemed to be of pure white marble, yet not white; but the purest and finest complexion, without a shade of color in it, yet anything but sallow or sickly. Her hair was a wonderful deep raven-black, black as night, black as death; not raven-black, for that has a shiny gloss, and hers had not, but it was hair never to be painted nor described, — wonderful hair, Jewish hair. Her nose had a beautiful outline, though I could see that it was Jewish too; and that, and all her features, were so fine that sculpture seemed a despicable art beside her, and certainly my pen is good for nothing. If any likeness could be given, however, it must be by sculpture, not painting. She was slender and youthful, and yet had a stately and cold, though soft and womanly grace; and, looking at her, I saw what were the wives of the old patriarchs in their maiden or early-married days, — what Judith was, for, womanly as she looked, I doubt not she could have slain a man in a just cause, — what Bathsheba was, only she seemed to have no sin in her, — perhaps what Eve was, though one could hardly think her weak enough to eat the apple. . . . Whether owing to distinctness of

side, and familiarly attentive to her, sat a gentleman of whom I remember only a hard outline of the nose and forehead, and such a monstrous portent of a beard that you could discover no symptom of a mouth, except when he opened it to speak, or to put in a morsel of food. Then, indeed, you suddenly became aware of a cave hidden behind the impervious and darksome shrubbery. There could be no doubt who this gentleman and lady were. Any child would have recognized them at a glance. It was Bluebeard and a new wife (the loveliest of the series, but with already a mysterious gloom overshadowing her fair young brow) traveling in their honeymoon, and dining, among other distinguished strangers, at the Lord Mayor's table.

After an hour or two of valiant achievement with knife and fork came the dessert; and at the point of the festival where finger-glasses are usually introduced, a large silver basin was carried round to the guests, containing rose-water, into which we dipped the ends of our napkins and were conscious of a delightful fragrance,

race, my sense that she was a Jewess, or whatever else, I felt a sort of repugnance, simultaneously with my perception that she was an admirable creature. — II. 238.

instead of that heavy and weary odor, the hateful ghost of a defunct dinner. This seems to be an ancient custom of the city, not confined to the Lord Mayor's table, but never met with westward of Temple Bar.

During all the feast, in accordance with another ancient custom, the origin or purport of which I do not remember to have heard, there stood a man in armor, with a helmet on his head, behind his Lordship's chair. When the after-dinner wine was placed on the table, still another official personage appeared behind the chair, and proceeded to make a solemn and sonorous proclamation (in which he enumerated the principal guests, comprising three or four noblemen, several baronets, and plenty of generals, members of Parliament, aldermen, and other names of the illustrious, one of which sounded strangely familiar to my ears), ending in some such style as this: "and other gentlemen and ladies, here present, the Lord Mayor drinks to you all in a loving-cup," — giving a sort of sentimental twang to the two words, — "and sends it round among you!" And forthwith the loving-cup — several of them, indeed, on each side of the tables — came

slowly down with all the antique ceremony.

The fashion of it is thus. The Lord Mayor, standing up and taking the covered cup in both hands, presents it to the guest at his elbow, who likewise rises, and removes the cover for his Lordship to drink, which being successfully accomplished, the guest replaces the cover and receives the cup into his own hands. He then presents it to his next neighbor, that the cover may be again removed for himself to take a draught, after which the third person goes through a similar manœuvre with a fourth, and he with a fifth, until the whole company find themselves inextricably intertwisted and entangled in one complicated chain of love. When the cup came to my hands, I examined it critically, both inside and out, and perceived it to be an antique and richly ornamented silver goblet, capable of holding about a quart of wine. Considering how much trouble we all expended in getting the cup to our lips, the guests appeared to content themselves with wonderfully moderate potations. In truth, nearly or quite the original quart of wine being still in the goblet, it seemed doubtful whether any of the company had more than barely touched the silver rim before

passing it to their neighbors, — a degree of abstinence that might be accounted for by a fastidious repugnance to so many compotators in one cup, or possibly by a disapprobation of the liquor. Being curious to know all about these important matters, with a view of recommending to my countrymen whatever they might usefully adopt, I drank an honest sip from the loving-cup, and had no occasion for another, — ascertaining it to be Claret of a poor original quality, largely mingled with water, and spiced and sweetened. It was good enough, however, for a merely spectral or ceremonial drink, and could never have been intended for any better purpose.

The toasts now began in the customary order, attended with speeches neither more nor less witty and ingenious than the specimens of table eloquence which had heretofore delighted me. As preparatory to each new display, the herald, or whatever he was, behind the chair of state, gave awful notice that the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor was about to propose a toast. His Lordship being happily delivered thereof, together with some accompanying remarks, the band played an appropriate tune, and the herald again

issued proclamation to the effect that such or such a nobleman, or gentleman, general, dignified clergyman, or what not, was going to respond to the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor's toast; then, if I mistake not, there was another prodigious flourish of trumpets and twanging of stringed instruments; and, finally, the doomed individual, waiting all this while to be decapitated, got up and proceeded to make a fool of himself. A bashful young earl tried his maiden oratory on the good citizens of London, and, having evidently got every word by heart (even including, however he managed it, the most seemingly casual improvisations of the moment), he really spoke like a book, and made incomparably the smoothest speech I ever heard in England.

The weight and gravity of the speakers, not only on this occasion, but all similar ones, was what impressed me as most extraordinary, not to say absurd. Why should people eat a good dinner, and put their spirits into festive trim with Champagne, and afterwards mellow themselves into a most enjoyable state of quietude with copious libations of Sherry and old Port, and then disturb the whole excellent

result by listening to speeches as heavy as an after-dinner nap, and in no degree so refreshing? If the Champagne had thrown its sparkle over the surface of these effusions, or if the generous Port had shone through their substance with a ruddy glow of the old English humor, I might have seen a reason for honest gentlemen prattling in their cups, and should undoubtedly have been glad to be a listener. But there was no attempt nor impulse of the kind on the part of the orators, nor apparent expectation of such a phenomenon on that of the audience. In fact, I imagine that the latter were best pleased when the speaker embodied his ideas in the figurative language of arithmetic, or struck upon any hard matter of business or statistics, as a heavy-laden bark bumps upon a rock in mid-ocean.[1] The sad severity, the too earnest utilitarianism, of modern life, have

[1] I rather think that Englishmen would purposely avoid eloquence or neatness in after-dinner speeches. It seems to be no part of their object. Yet any Englishman almost, much more generally than Americans, will stand up and talk on in a plain way, uttering one rough, ragged, and shapeless sentence after another, and will have expressed himself sensibly, though in a very rude manner, before he sits down. And this is quite satisfactory to his audience, who, indeed, are rather prejudiced against the man who speaks too glibly. — I. 540.

wrought a radical and lamentable change, I am afraid, in this ancient and goodly institution of civic banquets. People used to come to them, a few hundred years ago, for the sake of being jolly; they come now with an odd notion of pouring sober wisdom into their wine by way of wormwood-bitters, and thus make such a mess of it that the wine and wisdom reciprocally spoil one another.

Possibly, the foregoing sentiments have taken a spice of acridity from a circumstance that happened about this stage of the feast, and very much interrupted my own further enjoyment of it. Up to this time, my condition had been exceedingly felicitous, both on account of the brilliancy of the scene, and because I was in close proximity with three very pleasant English friends. One of them was a lady, whose honored name my readers would recognize as a household word, if I dared write it; another, a gentleman, likewise well known to them, whose fine taste, kind heart, and genial cultivation are qualities seldom mixed in such happy proportion as in him. The third was the man to whom I owed most in England, the warm benignity of whose nature was never weary of doing me

good, who led me to many scenes of life, in town, camp, and country, which I never could have found out for myself, who knew precisely the kind of help a stranger needs, and gave it as freely as if he had not had a thousand more important things to live for. Thus I never felt safer or cosier at anybody's fireside, even my own, than at the dinner-table of the Lord Mayor.

Out of this serene sky came a thunderbolt. His Lordship got up and proceeded to make some very eulogistic remarks upon "the literary and commercial" — I question whether those two adjectives were ever before married by a copulative conjunction, and they certainly would not live together in illicit intercourse, of their own accord — "the literary and commercial attainments of an eminent gentleman there present," and then went on to speak of the relations of blood and interest between Great Britain and the aforesaid eminent gentleman's native country. Those bonds were more intimate than had ever before existed between two great nations, throughout all history, and his Lordship felt assured that that whole honorable company would join him in the expression of a fervent wish that they might be held inviola-

bly sacred, on both sides of the Atlantic, now and forever. Then came the same wearisome old toast, dry and hard to chew upon as a musty sea-biscuit, which had been the text of nearly all the oratory of my public career. The herald sonorously announced that Mr. So-and-so would now respond to his Right Honorable Lordship's toast and speech, the trumpets sounded the customary flourish for the onset, there was a thunderous rumble of anticipatory applause, and finally a deep silence sank upon the festive hall.

All this was a horrid piece of treachery on the Lord Mayor's part, after beguiling me within his lines on a pledge of safe-conduct; and it seemed very strange that he could not let an unobtrusive individual eat his dinner in peace, drink a small sample of the Mansion House wine, and go away grateful at heart for the old English hospitality. If his Lordship had sent me an infusion of ratsbane in the loving-cup, I should have taken it much more kindly at his hands. But I suppose the secret of the matter to have been somewhat as follows.

All England, just then, was in one of those singular fits of panic excitement (not fear, though as sensitive and tremulous as

that emotion), which, in consequence of the homogeneous character of the people, their intense patriotism, and their dependence for their ideas in public affairs on other sources than their own examination and individual thought, are more sudden, pervasive, and unreasoning than any similar mood of our own public. In truth, I have never seen the American public in a state at all similar, and believe that we are incapable of it. Our excitements are not impulsive, like theirs, but, right or wrong, are moral and intellectual. For example, the grand rising of the North, at the commencement of this war, bore the aspect of impulse and passion only because it was so universal, and necessarily done in a moment, just as the quiet and simultaneous getting-up of a thousand people out of their chairs would cause a tumult that might be mistaken for a storm. We were cool then, and have been cool ever since, and shall remain cool to the end, which we shall take coolly, whatever it may be. There is nothing which the English find it so difficult to understand in us as this characteristic. They imagine us, in our collective capacity, a kind of wild beast, whose normal condition is savage fury, and are

always looking for the moment when we shall break through the slender barriers of international law and comity, and compel the reasonable part of the world, with themselves at the head, to combine for the purpose of putting us into a stronger cage. At times this apprehension becomes so powerful (and when one man feels it, a million do) that it resembles the passage of the wind over a broad field of grain, where you see the whole crop bending and swaying beneath one impulse, and each separate stalk tossing with the self-same disturbance as its myriad companions. At such periods all Englishmen talk with a terrible identity of sentiment and expression. You have the whole country in each man; and not one of them all, if you put him strictly to the question, can give a reasonable ground for his alarm. There are but two nations in the world — our own country and France — that can put England into this singular state. It is the united sensitiveness of a people extremely well-to-do, careful of their country's honor, most anxious for the preservation of the cumbrous and moss-grown prosperity which they have been so long in consolidating, and incompetent (owing to the national

half-sightedness, and their habit of trusting to a few leading minds for their public opinion) to judge when that prosperity is really threatened.

If the English were accustomed to look at the foreign side of any international dispute, they might easily have satisfied themselves that there was very little danger of a war at that particular crisis, from the simple circumstance that their own Government had positively not an inch of honest ground to stand upon, and could not fail to be aware of the fact. Neither could they have met Parliament with any show of a justification for incurring war. It was no such perilous juncture as exists now, when law and right are really controverted on sustainable or plausible grounds, and a naval commander may at any moment fire off the first cannon of a terrible contest. If I remember it correctly, it was a mere diplomatic squabble, in which the British ministers, with the politic generosity which they are in the habit of showing towards their official subordinates, had tried to browbeat us for the purpose of sustaining an ambassador in an indefensible proceeding; and the American Government (for God had not denied us an

administration of statesmen then) had retaliated with stanch courage and exquisite skill, putting inevitably a cruel mortification upon their opponents, but indulging them with no pretense whatever for active resentment.

Now the Lord Mayor, like any other Englishman, probably fancied that War was on the western gale, and was glad to lay hold of even so insignificant an American as myself, who might be made to harp on the rusty old strings of national sympathies, identity of blood and interest, and community of language and literature, and whisper peace where there was no peace, in however weak an utterance. And possibly his Lordship thought, in his wisdom, that the good feeling which was sure to be expressed by a company of well-bred Englishmen, at his august and far-famed dinner-table, might have an appreciable influence on the grand result. Thus, when the Lord Mayor invited me to his feast, it was a piece of strategy. He wanted to induce me to fling myself, like a lesser Curtius, with a larger object of self-sacrifice, into the chasm of discord between England and America, and, on my ignominious demur, had resolved to shove me in with his own

right-honorable hands, in the hope of closing up the horrible pit forever. On the whole, I forgive his Lordship. He meant well by all parties, — himself, who would share the glory, and me, who ought to have desired nothing better than such an heroic opportunity, — his own country, which would continue to get cotton and breadstuffs, and mine, which would get everything that men work with and wear.

As soon as the Lord Mayor began to speak, I rapped upon my mind, and it gave forth a hollow sound, being absolutely empty of appropriate ideas. I never thought of listening to the speech, because I knew it all beforehand in twenty repetitions from other lips, and was aware that it would not offer a single suggestive point. In this dilemma, I turned to one of my three friends, a gentleman whom I knew to possess an enviable flow of silver speech, and obtested him, by whatever he deemed holiest, to give me at least an available thought or two to start with, and, once afloat, I would trust my guardian-angel for enabling me to flounder ashore again. He advised me to begin with some remarks complimentary to the Lord Mayor, and expressive of the hereditary reverence in

which his office was held, — at least, my friend thought that there would be no harm in giving his Lordship this little sugar-plum, whether quite the fact or no, — was held by the descendants of the Puritan forefathers. Thence, if I liked, getting flexible with the oil of my own eloquence, I might easily slide off into the momentous subject of the relations between England and America, to which his Lordship had made such weighty allusion.

Seizing this handful of straw with a death-grip, and bidding my three friends bury me honorably, I got upon my legs to save both countries, or perish in the attempt. The tables roared and thundered at me, and suddenly were silent again. But, as I have never happened to stand in a position of greater dignity and peril, I deem it a stratagem of sage policy here to close these Sketches, leaving myself still erect in so heroic an attitude.

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